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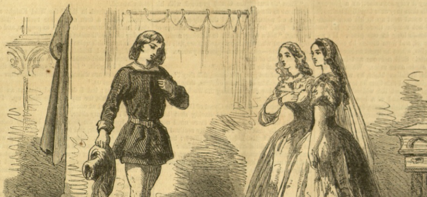
THE WILD KNIGHT;
OR,
THE UNKNOWN CRUSADER.

A TALE OF GERMANY IN THE DAYS OF THE EMPIRE.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

CHAPTER XIV.

A STARTLING EMERGENCY.



LOVE'S MESSENGER TO THE KNIGHT OF THE EAGLE.

As the first beams of the morning sun came dancing o'er the mountain tops, gilding the walls and towers of the old castle in its golden floods, Engelbert of Marburg touched his friend upon the shoulder. The sleeper started up, and when he saw the bright beams upon the opposite wall, he leaped from the bed. In the closet were all the arrangements for bathing, and when this had been attended to the crusaders left their chamber and moved towards the great stairway. Ere they had gone many steps they were met by Agnes and Constance, and the former demanded that they should turn back to the chamber they had just left. Of course the knights were not loth to obey this command; and having re-entered the apartment, and closed the door behind him, Agnes was about to speak when she saw the dark pool of clotted blood upon the floor, and marked where it had been mopped along towards the wainscotting at the foot of the bed.

"Mercy!" she gasped, turning pale and trembling. "What is this?"

"It is where the heart of Judah the Capuchin emptied itself, my lady," returned Engelbert.

"Aye, Agnes," added the Eagle, taking the maiden's hand as he spoke, "we had visitors during the night; and you may lay away in your memory the simple bit of knowledge that your warning saved both our lives—Engelbert's and mine."

The girls were anxious, and the Black Knight told the story of the adventure just as it had happened, relating all their arrangements before and after the coming of the assassins.

"But you have no more occasion for alarm," added the crusader; "so fear not. We leave the castle this morning, and when we next come we may be more free from persecution."

Awhile Agnes pondered upon what had happened, and finally she said, while the deep light of her eyes burned with a strange intensity,—

"This has fixed the seal upon my rejection of Rudolf of Baden. I do not think my guardian will urge the matter when he knows of this."

"Ah—you forget me," returned Constance, with a sad look and tone.

Agnes started, for she knew well to what her companion alluded.

"Alas!" continued the last speaker, "where Everhard has set his heart no mortal power can turn him unless he will. If he still persists in claiming my hand he will do anything to gain it."

"And yet they shall not do it," cried Agnes.

"God grant it!" ejaculated Constance.

"But to our business," interposed Agnes. A blush suffused her fair face for a moment, but it was soon gone, and then she resumed, with a faint smile upon her features. "As we are all engaged in the same path, and as our hopes for joy in the future hang upon the same result, we will not be governed by any undue or unnecessary coyness. You, gentlemen, know what has passed, and you know what we hope for in the future. You are about to leave us, and we must remain here within the physical power, at least, of those who are enemies to our plans. You leave us in the hands of those who have sworn to marry us. Why hide the truth now? You know we love you with the very vitality of love's life. Our whole future of joy on earth is bound up in that love. Constance has confessed all to me; and I tell thee, Sir Engelbert, thou hast won a heart worth keeping, even at a sacrifice."

"Hush, Agnes," murmured the maiden thus plainly introduced, blushing deeply as she whispered.

"No, no," interposed Marburg. "She has nothing to hush, for she but speaks the solemn truth. My life is pledged to the support of my claim."

"And now what we would know is this," continued Agnes. "Time is on the wing, and will not wait for us. We can hold out a while. We can keep off the claims of these two counts a short time longer; but what may we expect in the future? Pardon me, my best and noblest friend," she added, turning to her lover, "but I know not yet——"

"Hold," interrupted the Black Knight, moving a step forward and taking Agnes by the hand. I know all you would say. If we go to Aix-la-Chapelle we must go two hundred miles thither and back, with one or two days to spare. We can do all the travelling in six days if we can find horses on the road. Say two weeks in all. Can you remain as you are for two weeks?"

"There cannot be any possible doubt of that," said Agnes.

"And what say you, Constance?"

Constance of Baden had more to contend with than had her companion. The Count Everhard, with all his wickedness, had some noble traits, and as guardian of Agnes he might not be cruel beyond a certain limit. She could enter a convent if she chose, and thus put away the fatal nuptials; but poor Constance could not even do that. As her brother said, so must she do, and upon earth there was no tribunal to which she could appeal. She was a member of the house of Baden, and Rudolf was its lord and master! Yet she answered,—

"I think we may do that—if they do not suspect."

"Oh—I am sure of it. Why—they would not *dare* to crush us so!" And as Agnes thus spoke her eyes flashed proudly.

"Hold out two weeks," said the Unknown, "and if I live I will return to you. Beyond that we will provide for then. Sufficient unto that time is the work of reaching it in peace and safety."

Though considerable was said upon that point, yet the matter was left as thus reached; and when the parties separated it was with the mutual understanding that they should meet again in two weeks; and their hopes beyond that—even the hopes of Engelbert himself—rested upon the mysterious power of the Unknown Crusader.

For the first time Agnes received her lover's warm kiss upon the lips, and Engelbert, taking courage from so illustrious an example, followed suit; while Constance, ashamed of nothing which her heart prompted, returned the talismanic pledge of love.

"'Twill be better not to be seen together again," remarked Agnes; "so here let our adieus be spoken. Oh! my noble, generous love, God be with and guard thee!"

With a tear in his eye the Unknown pressed the fair maiden to his bosom, and bestowed upon her a blessing in return.

"Hark!" uttered Constance, whose quick ear was alive to the sound of danger. "Did you hear a footfall in the corridor?"

"No. 'Twas nothing," said Agnes.

They listened, but heard nothing, and in a few moments more the girls departed.

"There is a step upon the great stairs!" whispered Constance.

"Pooh!" returned her companion. "'Tis nothing, I assure thee. Some servant, probably."

And so it was a servant; but a servant of the arch fiend! Rudolf of Baden had been at the door. He had not seen Conrad yet, and he had come up to look into the room when he saw the party of lovers just entering from the corridor! But the maidens knew it not, and 'twas well for them that they did not, for they had bright hopes now; and they would have held hope faintly had they known all.

Shortly after the girls had gone the two crusaders once more left the apartment. At the head of the great stairs they met the Count Everhard. As soon as the morning salutations had passed the Unknown took his host by the arm and led him back to the chamber he had just left.

"My Lord of Wurtemberg," he said, with some sternness in his manner, but yet kindly, "I have left a mark upon your floor for which I am sorry."

"Ha!" cried the wild count, starting forward as he saw the blood. "What is this?"

"Do you know—or did you know—a stout monk named Judah?"

"The brother of Sir John, you mean?—of the Sir John you slew yesterday?"

"The same, my lord."

"Of course I know him. He slept in the castle."

"And now he sleeps in the arms of death. He came here during the night and was slain."

"But the body?" gasped the host, starting with a sudden emotion as he saw that the trail of blood led towards the secret entrance to the room.

"His companion took it off."

"Companion?" uttered Everhard, becoming more and more excited. "There is a mystery here. Out with it, sir."

"Then lend me thine ears," returned our hero. And thereupon he related the whole story, only omitting the part which Agnes had played, and also the confession of the armorer.

"Sir Knight," spoke the host, when the story was finished, and at the same time gazing sternly into the narrator's face, "do you hold the least shadow of a suspicion that I am in any way connected with this, or that I had the least idea that anything of the kind was contemplated?"

"Everhard of Wurtemberg," responded our hero, reaching forth and taking his host's hand as he spoke, "I know thee to be a bold and reckless man, as well as deeply wanting in moral character; but, as God is the judge betwixt thee and me, I would lay my life in thy keeping with as firm a faith as that with which the child rests its head upon the bosom of its mother! And more still: Had I need of help, to strike a foe in the dark, the Lord of Wurtemberg would be the last man I should seek!"

"Sir Unknown," returned the count, with a warm glow upon his face, "I thank thee. 'Tis not every man dares to speak the whole truth as thou hast done. I am sorry for this; but of one thing let me assure thee: the next night thou spendest under my roof thou shalt spend in safety, even if to secure it I struck down my friend!"

"I believe thee," said our hero, though for the present we shall not prove thee, as we start at once for the capital."

Together the trio descended to the hall, and ere long breakfast was announced. Rudolf of Baden did not appear, though there were numerous other knights and gentlemen who had remained in the castle over night. As soon as the meal was ended the two crusaders went out into the court, where they found their squires busily engaged in cleaning the horses.

"Where were you last night?" asked Engelbert.

"We had to sleep in the cot of the old woman in the vale below," replied Bernard.

"Why was that?"

"Because our bed was wanted for some knights."

"But was there no other room?"

"The Count of Baden said not."

"Ah—yes—I see. It's all right. But look well to the trappings, my men; and also keep an eye upon our heavy weapons. Have all ready as soon as possible. We must sleep in Heidelberg to-night, and you know the road is none of the easiest."

"We can be ready in a very few minutes, sir."

After this the knights returned to the dwelling, and having donned their armor and buckled on their swords, they sought their host. They were sure they saw Rudolf of Baden come in at the outer gate as they passed through the hall. He was in his saddle, and rode directly to the stable. They shook hands with Everhard—promised to stop when they came that way again—and having exchanged a kind adieu, they turned away. Their horses were ready for them, and, as they mounted, a hundred or more brave knights gave them the parting salutation. The gate was already open, and the drawbridge down; so they rode forth without any hindrance.

When they reached the green vale, the noble steeds pranced right joyously, and were eager for the race. They little heeded—faithful animals—the day's labor; as little did they know the rough path they were to tread. At the cot our hero pulled up, and called for old Clotilda. She came, and she pressed his hand to her lips as he bade her adieu.

"We shall be back in two weeks," he said; "but say nothing of it at the castle."

"You may trust me," she returned. And then, having instinctively glanced about her, as though she would see that no one had arisen from the hard earth during the last half-minute, she added—

"You will keep on by the Maghausen path?"

"Certainly. We can go by no other."

"Because my boy has gone out there for something—I don't just know what, though perhaps he may tell ye if he sees ye. You may love Hendrick, my good—a—sir; for if he is my son, I may say he is a noble boy."

"I have seen enough to tell me that, Clotilda. But we must be off. Adieu."

"God bless ye, my noble boy! God bless ye!"

"Brother," said Engelbert, when they had gained the wood, "that old woman knows you."

"Ah," uttered the other, gazing quickly into his companion's face.

"Aye—she does. Why—there is no question about that. You have seen her before since you have been here this time?"

"Yes; I came down with the horses day before yesterday, you know."

"I remember. And she knew you then?"

"Do you make the assertion, or do you ask the question?" asked the Unknown, with more than usual emotion in conversation of such a kind.

"Both," said Marburg, with a light smile, but which was quickly lost in an eager look.

"Well—she did know me then, the moment she saw me."

Engelbert of Marburg started slightly—somewhat as one might have started who had just seen a piece of gold, or a precious stone, by the wayside. He started thus, and then he gazed into the face of his companion. Their eyes met, and they both trembled. A while longer Engelbert gazed—eagerly and earnestly—as gazes one who seeks the sequal of a thrilling tale, and then a strange shade came over his face. His lip trembled; his cheek grew first pale, and then red; his broad bosom heaved with the escape of a pent-up breath; and, while a bright tear-drop started out upon the silken lashes of his eye, he extended his hand, and grasped the palm of his friend with a grip of iron.

"Great God of Wonders!" he uttered, while his face beamed with a whole volume of feeling, "how blind I have been! Six long years have I been by thy side almost every moment—by thy side in battle and on the march; at the festive board, and on the couch of sleep; with the strange mystery of thy incognito to lead my thoughts into every possible channel—and yet I knew thee not till now! Where have been my eyes? where the natural instincts of my heart? My own face is not more truthful when it tells me from the mirror that I am my mother's child than is thine now when it tells me thou art——"

"Hold Engelbert," quickly uttered the Black Knight, with a sudden energy in his tone and manner. "I see thou hast guessed the truth; but let not that name pass thy lips. I must not hear it now. Clotilda knew me, and I am sure the Count of Baden knew me. I had hoped to pass through Swabia without being detected; but I suppose my face bears the family likeness."

"Aye—in truth it does," cried Engelbert. "But still it is no cause of wonder that I did not see the similitude before. I suppose you will not explain any of the seeming impossibility yet?"

"Not at present, Engelbert. I have my reasons, and they are strong ones; though to you I might open it all, had I not, in view of certain contingencies, resolved with an oath that not one word of explanation should pass my lips until the world might know me for what I truly am."

For a short distance the two rode on in silence, the esquires being some way behind. They had entered the dense forest, and were just turning the abrupt angle of a huge rock, when they were slightly startled by the sound of a human voice. Both the knights stopped, and instinctively they sought their sword-hilts; but the idea of danger quickly passed as they saw the open, frank countenance of Hendrick Woldenburg. He stepped out into the path in advance of the riders, and having cast his eyes carefully about him, he said—

"I came out here to meet you, noble Sirs, for I think there's danger lurking in your path. Listen to me, for I must be brief, as I have business to transact in Stuttgart for my master Everhard, and he thinks I am even now on my way. Yesterday my good mother told me that I must watch the Count of Baden on your behalf. I have done so, and am here now to tell you what I have seen. In the first place, your two attendants were sent off out of the castle last evening, when there was no need of it. What happenad in the night you know, and I do not; but what has happened in the morning I know, and you do not. At an early hour Rudolf of Baden was astir, and I watched him narrowly, for I knew his habits—that he was not wont to hurry from his bed with the rising of the sun. But this morning he was out betimes, and I heard him inquiring for his armorer. Not finding him, he returned to the dwelling, and shortly afterwards I pretended to have business in the great tower. I ascended, and, passing by my lord's apartment, I saw Rudolf of Baden standing by your door, with his ear at the key-hole!"

"Ha! Was't after the sun was up?" uttered the Eagle.

"Yes, sir—over half an hour—may be an hour—after."

"By Saint Paul! the villain heard our words with the ladies, then!"

"He must have heard something that made him mad, for his hands were clenched, and his face like a demon's. Not long after this he descended to the court and called out twelve knights. They were all of them men of his own kidney—men who have often followed him in his marauding excursions—and men who have for some years stood ready to let themselves for hire to any party who had the means to employ them. To-day, for a stipulated sum, they fight valiantly in defence of a beleaguered city; and to-morrow, for another sum, they join the robber chieftain in his attack upon another city. They are bold errants, but reckless and bad. These twelve knights, in complete armor, rode forth from the castle, Rudolf accompanying them as far as the wood. They have gone this way; and I suppose you can judge as well as I, what they have gone for."

It was some moments ere either of the Crusaders spoke. The Black Knight seemed more than usually troubled—not with fear, but with perplexity.

"My good Hendrick," he at length said, "do you know any of these knights errant?"

"I know the leader among them. It is Sir Albert von Olkofen. Perhaps you have noticed him."

"Yes—I have; and a stout fellow he is. But I thank thee, Hendrick—we both thank thee—and the time may come when I can repay thee."

As the faithful servant was in haste they detained him no longer; so he plunged into the forest, towards the Stuttgart road, leaving the Crusaders to form their own plans for this startling emergency.

CHAPTER XV.

A TRAP INTO WHICH THE TRAPPERS MOST FATALLY FALL.

"Engelbert," spoke the Black Knight, "I will not draw thee into this danger. It is not fair that thou shouldst be exposed to every trial that is meant alone for me."

"Hold, my brother," cried Marburg, impulsively; "you do me much wrong by such an imputation; and I doubt if you would have spoken thus only your preplexity outstripped your reason. And further: I do not believe that you are the sole aim of this bloody count. He hates me as much as he does you. He knows that his sister may be the price he must pay for the hand of Agnes, and so he fears I may stand in his way as the lover of Constance as well as you who love the maiden he would buy. Our road lies to the west. I wish to travel it. If there be a hindrance in the way I can try how wide a path my good sword and lance will clear for me."

"Bravo!" cried the Eagle, seizing his companion's hand as he spoke. "Once more my soul is up. Oh—they shall find what 'tis to stop the rolling of an avalanche. What say you, my brave fellows?" he added, turning to the two esquires. "There's like to be new danger in the way."

"'Twill be old danger when 'tis passed," said Robert.

"And no danger at all if we will only think so," rejoined Bernard.

"Then on it is," pronounced our hero, with a triumphant look and tone. "I tell thee, Engelbert, these fellows forget themselves when they think to overcome us with such numbers. They should know that one stout arm can easily overcome a dozen weak ones. Ah—numbers hold not the power most people would give them. At this moment I would rather, alone, meet twelve Rudolfs of Baden than one Everhard. I could overcome them more easily. When the blood is up every blow from an iron arm carries death to its mark; and when a few have fallen the courage of the rest is on the wane."

"Yes—you speak truly," returned Engelbert. "But this Knight of Olkofen is a stout fellow, I have heard."

"Aye—and he must be the first disposed of if good Hendrick's suspicion is correct."

"I think there is no doubt on that score."

"Nor do I. So we will be prepared."

The esquires were directed to keep close up; and having unslung their shields and loosened their axes, the knights started on. At the distance of some three miles they came to an open space where a wide plain of clear sand seemed to indicate that a pond had at some former period occupied the place. It was surrounded on three sides by woods, while the fourth was flanked by a steep ledge of rocks.

"If there are twelve of them," said Engelbert, "and they mean to attack us, they would naturally choose such a place as this, for in a narrow path they could not use their numbers to advantage."

The Black Knight had thought the same thing, and consequently they kept a cautious lookout. When they had reached the centre of the sandy plain they saw a movement in the wood ahead, and in a moment more a number of horsemen appeared. The distance was some three hundred yards. There was a single shout—a war-cry—came breaking through the air, and then the distant horsemen dashed from the thicket. They seemed to have determined upon their course before they were observed, for on they came—the whole twelve—at full gallop, with their lances couched, and their vizors down.

"I'faith, but they are in for quick work," remarked our hero, as he closed his own vizor and brought his lance down. "Von Olkofen is mine. Do you take that fellow next on his left. Now for it!"

"*God and the Right!*" shouted the Crusaders, as they drew in their reins and started. Like two arrows they darted on, their attendants keeping close upon them.

The assassins had evidently expected to take them unawares—to reach them ere they could fully prepare for the combat; and they might have done this had the crusaders been without warning, for had the latter been obliged to unsling their bucklers, exchange the cap for the helmet, and make the other preparations, the others could have reached them ere all this was done. But they had no such advantage, and when they came they came upon men ready to meet them.

At the first shock Sir Albert von Olkofen and his horse both rolled in the sand, and the Black Knight carried off the fallen man's helm upon his lance-head. Engelbert, too, had borne down his opponent as though he had been a bundle of straw. The Eagle's lance was now useless, for Olkofen's helm could not be shaken off, the steel head having pierced the hard metal through and through. So he cast down the cumbered weapon and drew his ponderous axe. As he did so he saw one of the stranger knights in the act of bearing down upon Robert with a couched lance. Without a moment's loss he touched his noble horse upon the flank, and fairly rode the fellow down. He did not strike him, for a second lance was aimed at himself, and as his horse leaped upon the first knight, bearing him to the earth with the iron hoof upon his neck, he caught the coming lance upon his buckler, and at the same moment cleft the owner's skull with his axe.

"*God and the Right!*" shouted the Black Eagle, as he turned his horse after having thus felled the third knight.

"*God and Victory!*" answered Engelbert, turning from the bearing down of a burly knight.

"*God and Saint Agnes for Baden!*" yelled a robber knight, couching his lance upon our hero. The Eagle's horse leaped aside like a flash at the proper instant, and as his lance flew on, cleaving only the troubled air, the Crusader's axe came down upon his crest, crashing through the iron, and dividing the skull in two parts.

Seven of the assassins had already bitten the dust, and the five who were left seemed to hesitate. But it was only for the moment.

"*God and Saint Agnes for Baden!*" one of them cried, and on the instant they all started to the charge. One of them Bernard bore down with his axe; a second fell beneath Engelbert's heavy blow; while the Eagle turned off one lance with his buckler, and knocked aside another with his axe, two having set upon him. But they passed not so easily by. On the instant that he knocked aside the last lance, the Black Knight turned like lightning, and while the foremost of his foemen was yet regaining the poise of his weapon, a sudden sweep of the trenchant axe laid him low. The victor was bound for the second one, but Robert saved him the trouble, he having come up just in time to split his head open as his master turned away the fellow's lance.

"*God and Agnes for the Right!*" shouted the Black Unknown; and as the battle-cry broke upon the air, a single knight dashed away from the place at the top of his horse's speed. And of the twelve, that man alone was left to go and tell the strange tale!

And yet those two heroes of the Cross had not this day done anything which could add to the proof of their prowess. Once, before the walls of Antioch, they had slain two-and-twenty Moslem knights who disputed their entrance into the city! And once, in the mountain passes of Iconium, when the Knight of the Eagle had stopped to give water to a dying comrade, he was surrounded by a squadron of Egyptian warriors, all clad in mail. Alone, and beneath the heat of a midsummer sun, he cut his way through to his horse, and thence to the advance pass, slaying a score and six, with his battle-axe. Such were the men these twelve knights had come to slay. And yet, had they known fully the prowess of the crusaders, and been able to take them completely unawares, they might have succeeded.

As soon as the spared assassin had made good his escape, our hero leaped from his horse and went to where Sir Albert von Olkofen had fallen; for he did not at first think he had slain him, as he was sure his lance had not touched his flesh. He found, however, upon examination, that the neck was broken, the throat-lash of the helm having proved stronger than was profitable to its owner in that instance. As for the rest he knew they must be dead, for they had been stricken with that intent.

"My brave fellows," said the Unknown, turning to the esquires, "you have done well. We owe you much."

"That'll do for flattery," returned Robert, with a smile. "But yet we did all we could; though I wouldn't have given a pebble more for their heads if we hadn't been here. Why—you saved me the first thing, almost."

"'Twas well done all 'round," added Engelbert; "though I must say, I don't much like the plan of having to slay my own countrymen."

"Nor do I," rejoined the Eagle, thoughtfully. "I had hoped, when we reached our native land, that we might find a season of peace. And I hope 'twill come ere long, as it is."

"There's no doubt," said Engelbert. "But in the mean time, what shall we do with these bodies?"

"We can only let them remain where they are."

"There's a little hamlet only three or four miles on," interposed Bernard. "Perhaps the people there will come out and bury them."

"No," said the leader. "Let the man who sent these persons to their death, also send out and bury them. I think that fellow who rode away will carry him the news."

This seemed not only probable, but the better way, and ere long our little party were once more in the saddle, and on their way. They reached the hamlet of which Bernard had spoken, and as it was near noon they resolved to stop there for dinner. They did not intend to exchange horses until they reached Heidelberg, as they were sure of finding some one there with whom thay could leave their own priceless animals in safety.

* * * * * *

Rudolf of Baden eat his breakfast after the crusaders had gone, and then sought his armorer again. At the interview in the early morning, just after leaving the door of the chamber, where he had listened to an important conversation, he had not taken time to ask many questions, as he was in haste to set a new trap for the game he sought; so he now went to know all the particulars of the adventure, which had resulted in the death of the monk.

Conrad gave them to him as he chose to tell them, being very careful that he colored every thing to make his own conduct appear brave and faithful.

"But didn't the knights detain you?" asked the count.

"O—yes—certainly."

"And they questioned you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how did you explain the matter?"

"I laid it all off upon the monk; because, seeing as he was dead, he couldn't dispute me, you know. I told 'em the monk was determined to have vengeance for the death of his brother, and that he told me if I didn't go and show him the way he'd curse me with the Pope's Bull. I made 'em believe I was religiously inclined, and was afraid of holy curses. O—it all took. They believed it all. I made so melancholy over it that they let me go."

"Very well," returned the count. "It can make little difference, save that I would like to know who betrayed me."

"Betrayed you, sir?"

"Yes. I mean who placed them on their guard."

"Well, as for that matter," said Conard, who was a fellow of some wit, "I should think *you* had given them occasion enough for it. They have eyes and ears. And you must remember that they have travelled and seen things, too."

"You may be right," replied Rudolf, thoughtfully; and then he added, with some show of satisfaction. "They'll very soon start on a journey of greater length than they ever travelled before!"

After this the count went up to his own chamber, but he did not remain there long. He was too uneasy to remain long in one place. He returned to the court, and from thence he wandered down into the glen, where he spent an hour among the flowery shrubs. Still nervous and impatient, he sought the castle once more. When the sun had reached its meridian hight, he went down again into the glen, and this time he took his way over the bridge and past the widow's cot. Ere long he heard the sound of a horse's feet, and shortly afterwards a knight came in sight, whom he at once recognized as Sir Henry von Wahlem.

"Ah, Sir Henry," spoke the count, as the former stopped by his side, "you have ridden on in advance. You have been riding fast."

"Aye—I have, my lord," the knight returned, mechanically casting his eyes behind him.

"Did Sir Albert send you?"

"No, my lord. I came of my own accord."

"And where are the rest?"

"I left them on the sandy plain of Lahdorf."

"Ah—did you meet the two crusaders there?"

"Yes."

"And had you much trouble?"

"No, my lord—not *trouble*."

"Ah—I see. 'Twas quick work, eh? But out with it. Tell me all. How was't done? How did you meet them? Were any of your companion's injured? Perhaps you've left some wounded?"

"I don't think any of them are in pain, my lord."

"Well—that's good. I'm glad of that. Of course there couldn't have been much opportunity for harm to you. Did they see you? Did they make any resistance? Or did you run them down before they knew it?"

"O—we couldn't have done that, my lord. We couldn't have attacked two men behind—twelve of us."

"Well—'twouldn't have been just the thing, I know. But those two esquires—did you kill them?"

"No, my lord."

"Well—it don't matter much. I didn't think to speak of them. And yet, I would rather have had them killed, too; for they may take a notion to trot off to Aix and see the emperor. But never mind. Rudolf of Hapsburg will hardly venture this way with his old body and hooked nose, at present. Did you bury the bodies?"

"No, my lord."

"And do you know if Olkofen found any documents of any kind, upon the body of the Unknown Knight?"

"He did not, my lord."

"Ah—did not? You saw him search, did you?"

"He made no search, my lord."

"Made none? Why—I gave it to him strictly in charge, that he should make search on and about the body, to see if any thing whereby the man might be identified, could be found. And he knew how particular I was on that point. By Saint Paul! there may be that about the person of the Black Knight, I would not have—— But you may not have noticed. Ah—I see," added the count, with a smile of sudden relief,—"you did not stop. Sir Albert made the search after you left. Will he be along soon?"

"Sir Albert, you mean?"

"Certainly, I mean him. You wander, sir. Speak to the point. You have not told me how the fellows were slain."

"Ah—they were slain quickly, my lord. The first had his neck broken short off, for I saw his head lop over like a wet rag,"——

"Good!"

"——The second had his head split in two halves——"

"Good again!"

"—— and the third had his head split in the same manner,"——

"But you said the esquires were not killed."

"—— while the fourth was killed by the tramp of a horse upon his neck,"——

"What mean you? You said once the esquires were not slain. Are you out of your senses?"

"—— The fifth and sixth, had their heads split open at the same moment; the seventh was cut down by a sword; the eighth and ninth followed with their heads in equal parts; and I saw the tenth and eleventh bite the dust with more light in their heads than ever found its way there before. I just caught a glimpse of this last operation, as I turned my horse's head and dashed off as fast as possible!"

"*You have been injured*," said the count, trembling with fearful apprehension. "They struck you on the head."

"No, no—not me, my lord," returned Sir Henry, with a dubious shake of the head. "If they had you wouldn't see me here, now."

For some moments Rudolf gazed into the messenger's face without speaking. He could not realize all that he dimly feared. 'Twas too much. 'Twas impossible.

"What is this strange rigmarole, sir?" he at length said. "Speak plainly."

"Then plainly, Sir Rudolf of Baden, my eleven companions, who went away from you this morning sound and well, are all dead now! Poor Albert of Olkofen was the first to fall. The Black Knight bore off his helmet upon his lance, rolling him and his horse both in the sand, and breaking his neck. One other—Adolf von Lamermann—was killed by being rode down and having his neck crushed beneath the iron hoof of the Unknown's horse. All the others—nine of them—had their heads split from crown to base!"

"And the Crusaders?" whispered the count.

"Were not even scratched!"

"Sir Henry von Wahlem, you are jesting."

"My Lord of Baden, this is not a subject upon which I should be inclined to jest. But in sober earnest—those Crusaders are two born and reared devils! They handled their ponderous axes as I would handle a dagger. We had hidden in the wood upon the western side of the plain, and when they had got half way across we set forth. We had supposed that to ride them down would be the work of a moment; but as we started we saw that their casques were on, and their lances free. Of course we could not all meet them at once. At the first charge the Eagle bore Sir Albert down as I have said, and, with a most marvellous movement of his horse, dodged Lamermann's lance, and turned mine off upon his buckler But they are done for!"

The Count turned pale as death, and his teeth were set like a vice. Awhile he gazed into the face of the man before him, and then he said, with a spice of bitterness in his tone—

"If I had sent *men!*"

"Hold, Sir Count," uttered von Wahlem, quickly. "You have tried the prowess of the lesser of these two knights, and, if I mistake not, Rudolf of Baden accounts himself a good lance. And, more still, sir: Everhard of Wurtemberg will at this moment meet any six knights in the castle, and I think he would overcome them, too. Yet you have seen him in the hands of this Crusader."

"Then 'tis true!" the Count groaned, with his eyes bent to the earth. "Killed them all! And *they* go off unharmed! Oh! the holy saints curse them! But," he added, with a quick change of manner, "not a word of this to a living soul. If any ask you where your companions are, tell them they are gone—gone home—gone anywhere. You will not speak of this!"

"I shall not be likely to, sir."

"They did not give you chase, did they?"

"No, sir. The last I saw of them, they had dismounted, and were examining the work they had done."

Like a worn traveller the Count of Baden made his way back to the castle, and having shut himself up in his room, he remained there until near nightfall. By that time he had fully realized the failure that had attended his foul efforts; but as he arose and walked out from his chamber there was a smile of triumph upon his dark face, for he had now resolved upon a plan which was not so easily to be thwarted.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CRASH.

Rudolf of Baden had now become calm and collected, and in this state of mind he sought his host, and had the good fortune to find him alone.

"Ah," uttered Everhard, not in the best of humor, "you have kept yourself close to-day."

"Aye—I may have had occasion."

"That I grant ye," added Everhard, pointedly.

"Ha—what mean ye?"

"I mean what you meant; that you had had occasion to keep yourself close."

"But you have a deeper meaning," said Rudolf, eyeing the other sharply, and at the same time sitting down.

"So I have, Baden; and as I am not one who makes a practice of concealing matters I'll out with it.

"Do so, I pray thee."

"Then, plainly, I like not the manner in which you have treated the guests to whom I gave my hospitality. I tell thee, Rudolf of Baden, ere I would have had those men go away and think I had done so unto them, I would have chopped off my right hand."

The host spoke sternly, and for the moment the listener was confounded. But quickly recovering himself he said—

"What mean you?"

"Dost not know, Rudolf? Answer me truly. Do you not know my meaning well?"

"I think I know to what you allude. You fancy I have used exertions to have those Crusaders—the elder one especially—put out of the way."

"*Fancy*, eh? I *know* of what I speak."

"And was't *very* wrong to urge a stout knight to run a tilt with the Eagle, or to take a turn at the battle-axe?"

"No. But 'twas not very *right* to secretly hack a man's armor in pieces that advantage might thus be taken!"

"Ha!"

"You would not deny it?"

"I shall not."

"Nor was it *very* honorable to hire assassins to creep into a noble gentleman's chamber at dead of night to murder him!"

"The spirits have been tattling. Do you read fortunes, Sir Everhard?"

"So much I have read, Rudolf; and I tell thee plainly I like it not. No man shall strike an enemy down more quickly than I; but my hospitality shall not be turned into a fatal bane to him who accepts it!"

Rudolf's first impulse was to get angry; but a moment's reflection showed him that such a course could not possibly benefit him. With another he might not have stopped for this reflection, but with the Wild Count of Wurtemberg the case was different. He pondered a few moments, and then he said—

"I know this all appears dark upon the face; but you have not seen what I have seen. Would you marry with Constance of Baden?"

"Aye—and I will."

"Then just give me your ears for a few moments. Before last evening I had seen enough to show me that these two Crusaders would plan to snatch our affianced brides from us. You know what a woman is when her mind is once made up on such a point. This morning, however, I saw and heard much more. I saw Constance and Agnes enter the chamber of these knights. The door was closed and locked after them, and I crept up to listen. I heard them declare that they would not marry with us. I heard the Black Knight ask them if they could keep off our claims for two weeks. They told him yes. And then he promised that at the end of that time he would be back here. He is bound to see the Emperor. I heard him say that he would do something for yhu—I think it was to have the Emperor come down upon you. I judged that he meant to betray you and your castle into the hands of the imperial troops!"

"Is this so?" cried the excited host, leaping to his feet.

"It is."

"Why didn't you tell me this morning? I'd have sent death upon their track most surely!"

"Whom would you have sent?"

"A dozen of my knights."

"Aha—I was ahead of you. I sent Sir Albert von Olkofen with eleven of his bravest companions."

"And did they overtake them?"

"I sent them on ahead to lie in wait."

"And did they meet?"

"Yes. And eleven of my messengers were slain. Only Sir Henry von Wahlem got off alive."

"And these crusaders did it all?"

"Yes."

"Then I tell thee, Rudolf of Baden, they cannot be traitors! 'Tis impossible. Such men can no more be traitors than I could betray myself!"

"I would not swear that they meant to betray you, Sir Everhard; though they talked of seeing the Emperor, and swore they'd marry our ladies love. They kissed each other like youngsters already married, and swore all sorts of eternal fidelity. The girls cared nothing for our authority, while the men assured them they had nothing to fear if they could only hold themselves free during the two magic weeks."

Everhard took several turns across the room, and when he stopped there was a look of determination upon his face which plainly told one who knew him that his mind was most irrevocably made up to something.

"By the power of my sword," he uttered, "I swear that this shall be nipped at once! We'll see if these headstrong girls can thwart us thus! They shall be our wives without more delay!"

"That is what we ought to do," added Baden, with a sparkling eye.

"Aye—and it is what we *will* do, resumed Everhard. "They shall know our determination at once. Mind, Rudolf—I say *at once!*"

"You are right, sir. It must be so, or we may lose them forever. You hold the control of the Lady Agnes; and of course I am master of my sister's hand."

"O—I am fixed in this," the Wild Knight resumed, taking a turn across the room. "They shall have the morrow in which to prepare, and on the day after we'll make them ours!"

"You know this union is absolutely necessary to our safety," said Rudolf, by way of giving his companion an additional spur to override all objections of the girls. "Let the Emperor know that our two houses are united, and he will be slow to harm or molest us."

"Yes—I see; but I don't need that as an inducement to this, for my mind is made up. I'll see my fair ward at once."

"And I'll to my sister."

Thus speaking the two counts left the room. They went together, and together they found Constance and Agnes. Blanche of Wurtemberg was busy about her household affairs. The last rays of the sun were glancing over the tops of the western mountains, and the maidens were gazing out at the window when the knights entered. Constance trembled fearfully as she saw the looks which were cast upon her, for she guessed their meaning.

The men seated themselves, and then Everhard spoke:

"Agnes," he said, sternly and authoritatively, "what I have to say I will say at once, and in as few words as possible; and I desire you to understand that I speak from the most immovable purpose. You know the plan which has lain next my heart for years, and which was first proposed by your father. The matter has been postponed from time to time to please you; but it can be so no longer. The Count of Baden asks me for his bride, and I must answer him. You will give him your hand in marriage on the day after to-morrow!"

During the first of this speech Agnes had borne upon her face rather a defiant look; but as the last words dropped upon her ear she started as if with sudden pain, and a pallor overspread her fair features.

"You do not mean that," she at length said. "You cannot mean it."

"And why not, pray? Has not this plan been long enough under discussion?"

"And if it has, you know very well that I have opposed the match."

"Aye—I know," returned Everhard, with a sarcastic expression. "I know how you have opposed it. Mark me, and I will tell you: Never have you said promptly that you would not wed the noble count until since this Unknown Crusader crossed your path. You had professed a wish to take the veil, and be a sister of Saint Fulvia. You knew the command of your father; and you knew the hopes which the Lord of Baden and myself had founded upon it. Yet I could not directly forbid your entering a convent, as under our laws no guardian can do that; but I did mean that you should do either that or wed with the count. But by-and-by the Black Adventurer came along—a man wholly unknown in his native land—he smiles upon you, and kisses your hand a few times, and straightway you fancy you love him. Oh! what an easy-going heart you must have? But you will now marry with the man of your father's and your guardian's selection!"

"And now, let me speak," said Rudolf, ere Agnes could make any reply. "Constance, I must speak nearly the same words to you that you have already heard addressed to your companion. You also know what has been the plan for a long while. On the day after to-morrow you will become the mistress of this castle by being the wife of its owner!"

"Oh! have mercy, my brother!" the poor girl gasped in agony.

"Hold!" spoke Agnes, laying her hand upon the arm of her friend. "They will not do it. They dare not!"

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Everhard. "You are acting well. But let me assure thee that thou mayest as well make up thy mind first as last, for it shall be as I have said; and no power of earth or heaven can avert it."

"But—you will grant us more time than that," cried Constance, clasping her hands in agony. "Oh! you cannot be so cruel!"

"And how much time would ye ask?" said Rudolf, with a meaning glance towards Everhard.

"Oh! more than that. You will not, cannot, force me into this union with such unseemly haste. You will grant us—three weeks."

"But suppose it were impossible to set so long a time?" returned the brother, with a wicked look.

"Oh! 'tis not impossible! But if 'twere—if you could not wait till then—you will give us two weeks."

"Aha, my pretty sister, I could have fixed the period of your wish as well as you. But I must enlighten you. I chanced to hear the *brave* gentlemen this morning. By a curious freak of inclination I sought that chamber this morning, and heard every word your enraptured swains uttered. It was a glorious plan they laid for your everlasting happiness. But we must anticipate them. However, you need be under no fear of disappointing them, for we have discovered who this Black Unknown is, and the officers of the law are upon his track. Perhaps he told thee some stories of the Holy Land?"

Constance did not answer, and Rudolf turned to Agnes.

"Or," he added, "I suppose he turned his attention mostly to thee. Did he not tell thee stories of the Holy Land?"

Agnes of Luxemberg gazed indignantly into the speaker's face, but she was too deeply moved to reply.

"Because if he did," resumed the count, "he must have drawn vividly upon his imagination, since he has never been there at all. He is only a criminal escaped from justice!"

"But he is a knight?" said Agnes.

"Not at all. He has assumed that character as a disguise."

"My noble guardian," spoke the maiden, in a calm, deep tone of irony, "you must feel much flattered now that you know the character of the man who overcame you as man never overcame you before! And when it becomes generally known that a mere adventurer, who had no title of knighthood at all, bore you down like chaff, what will you say?"

"I think I'll leave Rudolf to settle that matter, as he knows more about it. But," he added, changing his tone, "you will see him no more. Neither you nor I know who he is, and you may be assured that no nameless wanderer takes away the charge your father so sacredly imposed upon me. And you know now how much I have heard of your clandestine meetings with the fellow."

Both the girls were confounded by the revelation of Rudolf's knowledge of their conversation with their lovers, and the only way they could manage the matter was to put a bold face upon it. But this, poor Constance could not do. She was pale and frightened, and had already entertained the fearful dread that the terrible blow must come. She shrank close to Agnes, and tried to still the beating of her startled heart.

"Gentlemen," said Agnes, when she saw that her companion could not speak, "we did see the two brave and noble knights in their chamber this morning; and we went there for that purpose. With regard to Constance, she has loved Sir Engelbert von Marburg for years, and you have known it. As for myself, I had not loved until I saw this Unknown Crusader. Unknown only in name, for to fame even the Emperor himself is not half so well known. Everhard von Wurtemberg, that Constance could not love you while the image of another occupied her heart is not at all strange. Had you been in a position to claim my hand, and had you laid your heart in my keeping, I will not say that I should not have loved you. I think I might have loved you truly and well. But—do you ask me to love *that* man! Murder is in his heart, and blood is upon his hands!"

"There is no blood upon my hands!" cried Rudolf, pale and agitated.

"There is! Love you? Oh! rather could I love the meanest thing that does your bidding!"

"By the eternal hosts of heaven, girl, you shall repent those words!" the Count of Baden hissed. And then turning to his companion he added,—

"Let us go now. There can be little profit in this. They know our determination, and that is enough."

"Certainly," responded the host; and then rising from his seat, and turning towards his ward, he said,—

"Agnes, the decree is fixed, and you cannot escape it. To-morrow you shall have for preparation; and on the day after you will become the Countess of Baden! Remember—the event is as sure as death! As sure as the sun rises upon us all living on that day, so sure shall this come to pass!"

This was spoken in that slow, measured tone which the Wild Count assumed when he gave utterance to a decree which no mortal power could alter, and the maidens both bowed their heads, for it came with a crushing force.

"There are reasons for this step," he added, as he placed his cap upon his head, "which you should know as well as I. In the present aspect of affairs it is absolutely necessary that our two houses should be joined. And—*it—will—be—done!*"

Thus speaking Everhard passed out from the room, and Rudolf of Baden followed him.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE VERGE OF THE ABYSS.

"Alas! what help have we now?" groaned Constance, at the end of a protracted silence. "The blow has come, and what earthly power can avert it!"

"Oh!" returned Agnes, "if I only knew what power the Black Knight possesses."

"And what then?" asked Constance, gazing up.

"I'd send after him."

"Send after him? Could he be reached?"

"I don't know." As Agnes said this she bowed her head and pondered for some moments. Suddenly a bright beam of hope gleamed across her face, and starting up from her seat she uttered,—

"We can but try. There is no other hope. We cannot leave the castle, I am sure. I will send for Hendrick. He at least is faithful, and may be trusted."

"But he has gone to the city."

"Aye—and he returned an hour since. Hendrick is a noble, faithful fellow."

Thus speaking Agnes moved to the bell-cord and pulled it, and ere long old Calypso made her appearance.

"Good Calypso," said the anxious maiden, "will you go out and find Hendrick Woldenburg? Make haste, for he may go down to his mother's cot if you lag. Find him and send him here to me. Bid him come as secretly as possible."

The woman promised to do as she was bid, and having received a few more words of caution she left. In the course of some fifteen minutes there was a light rap upon the door, and upon opening it Hendrick entered.

"O—I'm glad you've come, Hendrick," said Agnes. "I feared you might have left."

"No. I've been following up Sir Henry von Wahlem."

"What—the one who came with von Olkofen?"

"Yes.—I must tell you." And thereupon, in as few words as possible, he related to them all the circumstances of the morning's battle. On his return from Stuttgart he had gone out of his way around by the plain, and there found the bodies of eleven knights; and from Wahlem he had gained the particulars.

For a few moments the fair girls were completely confounded with wonder and admiration. Agnes' eyes burned with an intense fire, and her face was lighted up by a glow of proud enthusiasm.

"Oh!" she uttered, "and they would force me to leave this noble knight, and wed with a mere hawk—a carrion vulture—who hangs about his prey at night, watching for some one more brave to do the murder!"

"He's a noble gentleman, my lady—I know he is," returned Hendrick, warmly.

"So he is. But see here, good Hendrick—dare you risk something for us?"

"Dare I? My very life is yours, lady Agnes. Ah, to one who has been so kind to my poor mother I cannot be too faithful. What would you have?"

"I will be plain, for I know you can be secret. Everhard and Rudolf have been here, and they swear by the most fearful oaths that we shall marry them on the day after to-morrow. They mean it—they are determined. We would rather die than wed with them, and yet we have no power to avert the blow. The Eagle and Sir Engelbert meant to reach Heidelberg to-night."

"So I heard them say, lady."

"Oh! would that I were there!" uttered Constance. "Once more back in the massive old castle that was the home of my parents!"

"Never mind that now," interposed Agnes. "I suppose Rudolf means, if he gains me for a wife, to take me thither for its mistress."

"It is a noble castle, lady," remarked Hendrick. "The largest in Swabia; and I think the stoutest in the empire."

"I know all that. But do you think you can reach it to-night?"

The young armorer started, for this idea had not before entered his mind.

"Say, Hendrick," Agnes continued, "do you not think you could do it? The moon rises in less than half an hour, and will of course be up all night. The distance by the road is not over fifty miles, is it?"

"About fifty-four, lady. But I could do it with a change of horses. I should have to make two, and perhaps three, changes on the road; for it is a hard one, as you are aware."

"Oh! you shall have gold, as much as you can carry, if you will go. Overtake Engelbert and his companion, and tell them all. Tell them—But they will do what they think best when they know our situation. Tell them that there is no power here but death that can save us from the sacrifice."

Hendrick bowed his head and pondered awhile; and then he said,—

"We have horses in the glen—and some fleet and strong. *I will go!*"

"O—God bless you, good Hendrick! But stay not. Hasten for your life. They may have stopped at the castle, for the retainers there cannot know how their master Rudolf is at enmity with them. Go thither and seek them. Tell them as I have told you. Tell them that our secrets are all known. Tell them that no power——But you know all——"

"I know, lady. I will away at once; and if I do not reach Heidelberg until after they have started, I will take a fresh horse and follow."

"That's right, good Hendrick. Oh—you cannot help finding them, for all night while they are sleeping you will be on the road."

"Keep up stout hearts," said the young man, "for if the Black Knight can help you, he shall have the opportunity."

Hendrick Woldenburg received sufficient gold to pay for the use of extra horses, and then made his way from the castle at once, and when he reached his mother's cot, he told her he was going to do an errand for the ladies Agnes and Constance.

"But whither to-night?" the old lady asked.

"If I don't tell you, then when my lord comes to ask for me to-morrow you can simply tell him you know nothing about it."

Clotilda understood her son's meaning, and she was perfectly satisfied,—and the more so as she knew very well where he was bound.

In less than half an hour Hendrick had caught and equipped the best horse in the glen, and having armed himself with a sword, a light axe, and cross-bow, he set off. The moon was just lifting her round, genial face above the tree-tops as he started, and by the time he reached the plain, where the bodies of the dead knights yet lay, her light was full and sufficient.

Agnes and Constance walked out upon the wall back of the servant's department, and there they remained until they saw a dim form, like a horse and rider, cross a narrow opening, where the moonbeams fell, at a swift gallop.

"Thank God!" they ejaculated, in concert; and then they returned to their chamber.

On the morrow they kept their room until the hour for dinner. They saw a body of knights and men-at-arms riding through the glen, while before them were borne eleven corses on rough litters. They knew that these must be the ones whom their lovers had slain on the day before; and as the thought dwelt in their minds Agnes remarked that men who held such courage and prowess, would not be apt to lay claim to power which they did not possess. So they had reason for hope in the promise the Unknown had made.

"He surely spoke as though he had the power to overcome the claims of the count," she said, in conclusion.

"He did," rejoined Constance. "And he spoke very hopefully, too. Or—I should say, very confidently. I think he would not have said so merely to excite our hopes."

"Of course he would not."

And thus had the girls been engaged since morning in calling up every point upon which they could hang a hope; and also in wondering where Hendrick was at least once in every fifteen minutes. After having seen the cavalcade pass from the glen around behind a spur of rock which concealed the burial place from view, the anxious couple returned to the castle, and in the hall they were met by Everhard.

"Ah, my pretty ones, you are looking fresh and happy to-day," he said. "Are you making preparations for the important event of to-morrow?"

There was something in the calm, determined assurance with which the count spoke that drove all hope for the while from the minds of the maidens. In an instant they thought how many circumstances might combine to defeat their own plans, and also of the fearful advantage which their persecutors held over them. Everhard, stern and unyielding, seemed more powerful to them than ever before. What mystic power could the Unknown Crusader interpose? What was it possible for any one to do against the wilful lord of Wurtemburg?—against him who even laughed the emperor to scorn?

"My lord," answered Agnes, calmly, but with an expression of pain, "we have not thought yet of preparation."

"Have not, eh?"

"No, my lord, for we could not believe that you meant to force this thing through with such unseemly haste."

"Oho—you fancy we will put it off, do you?"

"We feel sure you will, sir. We cannot believe that you would——"

"Stop, stop, Agnes. You are but wasting time and words. I know not what preparation you think is necessary, nor do I care. Only let me assure you of this: your preparations will all be made on the morrow; and that, too, before noon; for ere the sun passes its meridian height you will be a wife!—I wish to hear no more. I mean just what I have said, and so shall it be done."

As soon as he had thus spoken the knight turned away, and the girls hastened to their chamber, where they threw themselves upon a couch, and clasped in each other's arms gave way to tears.

"Alas!" groaned Constance, "we only make our pain more severe by indulging these delusive hopes. There is no ground for the bright thought we have held. When the Black Knight said he could save us, he only meant that he would be here, and that he would claim your hand. Look at it as you will: Does it appear possible that he can hold any such power as we must have to free us from these fatal nuptials? Suppose he should come here with the Emperor in person, and the whole imperial army at his back, he could do nothing. My brother has the law on his side, and your guardian has the same. Oh! would that I had lain down with my mother long years ago, ere I had lived to love, and be thus crushed and abused!"

"You may be right with regard to the improbability of any release for us," replied Agnes, "but yet there can be no harm in holding on to hope. If we must fall into the terrible grave of life which has been digged for us, we shall have then nothing but sorrow and sadness for our lot. Oh—if there is the remotest shadow of a hope I will cling to it till the last moment."

At this juncture Calypso opened the door and entered.

"Ah—my poor young lambs," the old woman sympathizingly said, as she saw both the maidens in tears, "I know 'tis a terrible thing. I know all about it. But I wouldn't cry. It wont do ye no good. Perhaps after ye've been married a spell, and they see what two sweet, dear things ye are they'll be kind and loving. Don't ye think so?"

"Yes, Calypso. But you don't understand it."

"Yes, I do, my lady. I was married once myself, and I know all about it. It kind o' made me tremble at first, but in a very short time I found that a man wasn't such a hard thing to govern after all. Just you keep a cool, quiet tongue—keep your eyes open—find out your husband's weak points, and you've got him. I'll tell ye what," the old woman continued, gazing furtively about her, as though to assure herself that none others were near to hear the impotant revelation she was about to make, "after you are married, if ye find ye can't manage your husband just as ye want to, come to me. Come to me, and I'll give ye some instruction that'll be of use to ye."

Agnes could not help smiling at the good old servant's quaint ideas; and even Constance forgot for the while her pain.

"If I have the need I will certainly call upon you," said the former. "Your experience must be considerable in the art of married life."

"Aye—ye may well say so, my lady. No woman ever came through the siege better than I did. And mind ye, I had no trouble—not a bit. I did it just as easy as could be. When ye want to get the control of a man ye mustn't make much show about it, because if ye do he'll smell the mischief. No, no,—ye must do it easy like, and keep it to yourself."

"I'll remember, Calypso. But did you come to tell us only this?"

"O, no. Bless me, I forgot; —and master is in a great hurry, too. He's flying around like a mad goat. Hendrick has gone, and he can't find him, and he bade me come here and see if you knew where he was."

"How should we know where he is?" returned Constance.

"Sure enough," said Calypso. "Just what I thought when he told me to ask you, only I didn't say so. Of course you don't know where he's gone?"

"You can tell the count that we—that we—*do not* know where Henkrick is."

With this the old woman left, and then Constance turned to her companion

"This is bad," she said. "If the count comes what shall we tell him? We cannot possibly deny all knowledge of Hendrick's whereabouts. Of course we have no more idea where he now is than Everhard himself."

"It is bad," returned Agnes, thoughtfully. "I would not tell a falsehood—I could not. I would not have falsehood upon my soul for life itself."

"Nor would I," added Constance, decidedly; "and that is why I felt that our position was so bad."

"If he does come," resumed Agnes, after a few moments of thought, "we have but one course to pursue. We will refuse to answer any further upon the subject."

But the maidens were not put to the test. They saw nothing more of Everhard during that day; and the only further message from him was by Calypso who came in a little after dark, bearing in her hand two magnificent tiaras of diamonds, each accompanied by a brooch and bracelet.

"This is for you," said the aged messenger, handing one of the sparkling tiaras, a brooch and a bracelet, to Agnes. "And this for you," handing the others to Constance. "And master bade me say that you would please him by wearing them to-morrow."

"That will do," said Agnes, who saw that Calypso was prepared for a long talk.

The woman took the hint, and left.

Neither of the girls spoke for a long while. They gazed first upon the gleaming stones, and then their eyes met. Once more the fear had come upon them, and with a deep groan Constance sank forward and pillowed her head upon her companion's bosom. Agnes clasped her arms about the fair form, and then raising her eyes to heaven she fervently uttered,—

"Great God, have mercy on us!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

READY FOR THE SACRIFICE.

Morning came, and with the first beams of the sun Agnes and Constance were at their window, which looked to the Northward and Eastward, straining their eyes over the dimly pencilled path in the forest. They had gazed all up and down the glen, and away into the dark wood; but they could see no living thing therein.

"If he found them at Heidelberg, they might have been here ere this," said Constance, tremulously.

"Certainly," responded Agnes. "But then you know how many things may have occurred to detain them. And then, Hendrick may not have found them at Heidelberg. He may have had to ride on beyond there. You know he did not get away until late, and may have had to ride on some distance farther than we had calculated upon."

"And do you hope still?" Constance of Baden asked, showing by her look and tone that all hope had gone from her bosom.

"Certainly I do," the noble heiress of Luxemburg answered. "The dying man has hope, while the vital spark remains. Still I will not deceive you, Constance. The more I think of the power which our present masters hold over us, the more doubt have I of any one to overcome it. Oh! what a word for you and me! *Master!* My soul starts up like a roused lion at the thought. *Master!* Oh, that Agnes of Luxemburg should have come to this!"

Constance trembled violently, but she made no reply. Together they stood there by the window and gazed off into the distant path until their eyes were tired and then they went back to their couch. This path followed the glen in a northerly and north-easterly direction, several miles ere it took its westerly turn across the mountains; and even as far as the eye could reach with power enough to distinguish a human form, there was an open waste across which the track lay that was visible from the windows of the castle.

"Will we make any preparation?" asked Constance, in a low, fearful whisper.

"I shall dress as usual," returned Agnes.

"And the gems they have sent?"

"We had better wear them. To refuse would only be an act of stubbornness without a purpose, and could do us no good, but might add to our sufferings. Let us do nothing that can only make our *masters* angry, without any possible result of good to ourselves."

"But the *word*, Agnes?—will you speak the word that is to make you the wife of a man whom you love not?"

"It will matter little whether we speak that word or not. Your brother can answer for you, and I know Everhard will assume the responsibility of answering for me."

"And this is the justice of our rulers."

"Aye," returned Agnes, bitterly: "They can bow to us at their sports, and do deeds of valor for us that we smile upon them; but when the solid, sacred good of a life-time is at stake, they care for us only as their own selfish purposes lead them. Let the question of power come up—let them know that a certain alliance will add to their strength in the field—and a human heart is of no account, at least with most of them."

They talked on—talked of hope and fear—of their lovers and of their tyrants, until the hour of breakfast was at hand. The great bell upon the tower gave the signal for the morning's meal, and ere long afterwards there came a rap upon the maidens' door. Agnes arose and opened it, and Everhard stood before her. He smiled as he met her gaze, and taking her hand, he said—

"You are looking fresh this morning, my sweet cousin; and you too, fair Constance. I trust your hearts are as light as your faces are bright. But come—I have sought you that you might have conduct to the breakfast hall. Will you take my arm?"

Without a word Agnes took one arm, and Constance the other, and thus they reached the table. The Count of Baden was already there, though not yet seated. He bowed, with a very broad smile upon his dark face, and hoped the ladies were well. But he needn't have said so, he added, for he could see by their looks that they were well. But he hoped that they might always be well.

Poor Agnes! And that man was to be her husband! The assassin—the murderer—the liar—and the drunkard! She gazed upon him, and she felt her heart grow sick within her. She could not do it! She could not live with such a curse upon her! She looked upon Everhard, and she thought if she could be in Constance's place she should be far less unhappy. The latter man was at least brave and noble, as nobleness went in those times. His wife would never have occasion to be ashamed of her husband; nor would she ever fear him, for it lay not within his power of heart to do harm to a female beyond the mere carrying out of great plans. Though he might sacrifice a heart, or a thousand hearts, upon the altar of legitimate power, yet he was not the man who could quarrel with a wife. If she was pleasant and agreeable, she would share his companionship; but if she was perverse and sour, she would see little or nothing of him.

But the other!—oh, what a fall! Rudolf of Baden to Everhard of Wurtemberg was as the venomous serpent of the tangled fen to the lion of the open forest! So said Agnes to herself as she gazed from one to the other. She was sick at heart and she could not eat. The very presence of Rudolf was as a magic spell of pain and agony upon her.

"How now, my sweet cousin?" cried Everhard, as Agnes arose from the table. "You look pale. What is it?"

"I am not well, my lord. Will you come to me when you have time?"

"Surely, I will.——What? And you too, Constance?"

"Pardon me, my lord, but I cannot see Agnes go away alone."

"By Saint Paul!" cried the Count of Baden, after the girls had gone, and bringing his fist down upon the table at the same time, "that is a plot! They mean to play sick!"

"For what, think you?" asked Everhard, quietly.

"In thoughts to put us off, to be sure! I know those over coy damsels well. They'll work energetically to have their will out."

"You must have some mercy upon the poor things, Rudolf. You cannot expect a maiden like Agnes of Luxemburg to marry you very joyfully."

"Ha! Everhard!"

"Easy, my good Lord of Baden. There is no need that you and I should dissemble. You know Agnes loves the Black Unknown, and also that she is aware of your questionable efforts to put him out of your way. And more still: I know she never liked you, and I think you have the same knowledge."

"But do you—a— By my halidom, Everhard, you speak strangely. I suppose you would hold your ward free now if you dared!"

"Peace, good Rudolf," spoke the host, only smiling at his guest's rising anger. "You should not speak so to me, for you know me better. You know I have spoken the word. We are so situated at present that we must combine our power. The emperor already plans our overthrow; but when he knows that all Baden, Luxemburg and Wurtemberg are combined against him, with the thousand knights we can call to us from the mountains, he will look more carefully. I respect him not. I love him not. He was once with us—for years a robber knight of the most unscrupulous kind; but now that he has been lifted to the imperial throne, he seeks to crush out his former companions. But he shall not do it; and as one of the means towards that end I have planned these marriages. I tell you plainly that under any other circumstances I would not urge Agnes to the union."

"You forget her father's will in this matter."

"No. He left her free to enter a convent if she chose. But fear not. She shall be your wife this day! I have said it!"

After this, some moments were passed in silence. As before, Rudolf's first impulse was to show some temper; but he quickly remembered how useless that would be, so he allowed his feelings to cool down.

"Has Hendrick come back yet?" he at length asked.

"No. I think he's got a flame in Stuttgart, and he has taken this opportunity to go and see her."

"What particular opportunity do you refer to?"

"Why—this wedding season. He knew we should not be off on any excursion, and that, as a natural consequence, his services would not be required."

Baden made no reply to this; and ere long afterwards he arose from the table and went out into the court, while the host sought his fair ward. He found her in her chamber, alone. She had been weeping, for her eyes were swollen, and there were traces of tears upon her cheeks. But she was calm now, but very pale.

"Well, Agnes," said the Wild Count, taking a seat as he spoke, "you bade me come to you, and here I am. What would you say?"

Agnes arose—stood for one moment gazing the count in the eye—and then she threw herself upon her knees.

"Sir Everhard," she cried, with her hands clasped, her eyes swimming, and her beautiful features wrought upon by the whole power of her pleading soul—"my guardian, my uncle—friend of my childhood, and companion and guide of my increasing years, by all the love thou didst ever bear me, I pray thee listen to my appeal. Oh! force me not into this unholy, unnatural union! For the love of God, break not my heart by thus binding me to one who is but a serpent in the path of life—a thief in the fold of humanity! Save me! oh, save me! and I will bless thee to the last hour of my life! Save me—save me from this terrible curse—and I will pray for thee with my deepest, holiest prayers! Oh! you cannot refuse me—you will not!"

"But—Agnes—thou knowest that the die is cast——"

"No! no! no!" interrupted the maiden, with increasing vehemence, "say not so! It cannot be so if you will it otherwise. Remember your love for my father—remember that my mother was your only sister! Oh, she loved thee, Everhard, and she died the more tranquilly because she thought thou would'st be kind to her child."

"And have I not been kind, Agnes? Have I not been all that you could have asked?"

"Yes—yes; God knows you have! And wilt thou not be kind still? Oh! save me from this! Save me if thou lovest me!"

"I do love thee, Agnes; and only thine one folly leads thee to look so fearfully upon this marriage."

"My own folly, Everhard? Oh! thou knowest 'tis not so. Look upon the man thou would'st have me wed! Oh! I dare not think of him, for fear my poor heart will hold such thoughts of madness as long years of penitence may not wash away! But spare me, my uncle—oh! spare me!"

Everhard saw that it would not do to prolong this scene, for his heart was touched, and his face began to show it. So he took the maiden by the hand, and as he lifted her to her feet as though she had been a mere child, he said, in a tone of such sterness and fixedness of purpose that no one could have hoped against it,—

"Agnes, my mind is made up! We have gone too far to recede. Every principle of interest and safety demands the union, and it must be made.—Stop! Not all the angels of Heaven could move me from my purpose. You must be the wife of Rudolf of Baden within two hours! And now be wise. Give over this vain fretting, and make up thy resolution for the fate you cannot avoid. Remember," he added, as he approached the door, "the power never had its birth that can save thee from the union we have fixed upon!—the union long contemplated by both you and myself, and by another—a union now made doubly necessary: Necessary in the fulfillment of your father's plans and hopes; and necessary, to the safety of our united houses! I have said, and you will now rest upon your own good sense."

Thus speaking, the Wild Count strode from the apartment, and Agnes of Luxemburg threw herself upon the couch in a passionate flood of tears. Thus Constance found her when she entered some time afterwards. The latter knew what had been her companion's purpose in the interview with Everhard, and the position in which she found her friend told her the result at once.

"Agnes," she whispered, laying her cheek against the tear-wet face, "and thus the last hope is gone!"

Quick as thought, Agnes started up at these words, and having gained the floor, she gazed wildly about her. Her eyes rested upon her sister in sorrow, and gradually she grew calm.

"Constance," she said, in a deep thrilling tone, "it is past! The last hope from our masters is gone! Aye—and they have seen me weep my last tear! Henceforth they shall see no more terror in my face to mock at. I have pondered long and seriously, and I know we cannot escape the doom! Let us meet it as becomes us. I may be made the wife of Rudolf of Baden—I may be bound to him as a slave is bound to his master—but he shall never know me as man knows a loving wife! There—am I not calm? Am I not firm of look?"

Constance shuddered as she gazed upon the ghastly features of her companion; and for a moment the fear presented itself that 'twas a maniac look she saw. But a faint smile dispelled the fear, and on the next moment the maidens were resting upon each other's bosom.

"We will be firm," whispered Agnes.

"As firm as steel," was the reply of Constance.

"What we cannot escape we must endure. I know their hearts, and they will only mock us if we show our anguish."

"Fear not, Agnes. My heart can hold all its agony. I am prepared for—death!"

"And I, too. 'Twill come soon enough if my prayers are answered. The grave lies next beyond the desecrated altar!"

"Even so! Farewell to joy and peace forever! God have mercy!"

"AMEN!"

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]

DIAMOND DUST.

The demand for diamond dust within a few years has increased very materially, on account of the increased demand for all articles that are wrought by it, such as cameos, intaglios, etc. Recently, there has been a discovery made of the peculiar power of diamond dust upon steel; it gives the finest edge to all kinds of cutlery, and threatens to displace the hone of Hungary. It is well known that in cutting a diamond (the hardest substance in nature) the dust is placed on the teeth of the saw—to which it adheres, and thus permits the instrument to make its way through the gem. To this dust, too, is to be attributed solely the power of man to make brilliants from rough diamonds; from the dust is obtained the perfection of the geometrical symmetry which is one of the chief beauties of the mineral, and also that adamantine polish which nothing can injure or affect, save a substance of its own nature. The power of the diamond upon steel is remarkable: it is known to paralyze the magnet in some instances—and may there not be some peculiar operation upon steel with which philosophers have not yet taught us to be familiar? How is it that a diamond cast into a crucible of melted iron converts the latter into steel? Whatever may be said it is evident that the diamond dust for sharpening razors, knives and cutlery, is a novelty which is likely to command the attention of the public, whether or not it is agreed that there is anything *beyond* the superior hardness of the dust over the steel to give that keenness of edge that has surprised all who have used it.

* * *

DREAD OF INFAMY.—Infamy is so cutting an evil, that most persons who have any elevation of soul, think it worse than death. Those who have it not in their power to revenge it, often pine away in anguish, and loathe their being; and those who have, enjoy no rest till they have vengeance.

THE BIBLE BEFORE THE CLASSICS.

It is a very common thing for young men, fresh from their books, to boast of the superiority of the heathen poets, and to interlard their writings with quotations from their works. But if these budding young gentlemen did but know it, the BIBLE is as much superior to their favorite authors in purity, vitality and sublimity of style, as the latter are to ordinary poets. Let us take, for an illustration, the description of the horse in his glory, by Homer, Virgil, and Job. We will commence with Homer:

> "Freed from his keepers, thus with broken reins
> The wanton courser prances o'er the plains;
> Or in the pride of youth o'erleaps the mounds,
> And snuffs the females in forbidden grounds;
> Or seeks his watering in the well-known flood,
> To quench his thirst, and cool his fiery blood:
> He swims luxuriant in the liquid plain,
> And o'er his shoulders flows his waving mane;
> He neighs, he snorts, he bears his head on high,
> Before his ample chest the frothy waters fly."

Virgil's description is much fuller than the foregoing, which is only a simile; whereas Virgil professes to treat of the nature of the horse. It is thus admirably translated:

> "The fiery courser, when he hears from far
> The sprightly trumpets, and the shouts of war,
> Pricks up his ears, and trembling with delight,
> Shifts pace, and paws; and hopes the promis'd fight.
> On his right shoulder his thick mane reclin'd,
> Ruffles at speed, and dances in the wind.
> His horny hoofs are jetty black and round:
> His chin is double; starting, with a bound
> He turns the turf, and shakes the solid ground.
> Fire from his eyes, clouds from his nostrils flow:
> He bears his rider headlong on the foe."

Now follows that in the book of Job; which under all the disadvantages of having been written in a language little understood; of being expressed in phrases peculiar to a part of the world whose manner of thinking and speaking seems to us very uncouth; and, above all, of appearing in a prose translation; is, nevertheless, so transcendantly above the heathen descriptions, that hereby we may perceive how faint and languid the images are which are formed by mortal authors, when compared with that which is figured, as it were, just as it appears in the eye of the Creator. God speaking to Job asks him—

"Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear, and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith amongst the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off; the thunder of the captains, and the shouting."

Here are all the great and sprightly images that thought can form of this generous beast, expressed in such force and vigor of style, as would have given the great wits of antiquity new laws for the sublime, had they been acquainted with these writings. We cannot but particularly observe, that whereas the classical poets chiefly endeavor to paint the outward figure, lineaments, and motions; the sacred poet makes all the beauties to flow from an inward principle in the creature he describes, and thereby gives great spirit and vivacity to his description. The following phrases and circumstances seem singularly remarkable:

"Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?" Homer and Virgil mention nothing about the neck of the horse but his mane. The sacred author, by the bold figure of thunder, not only expresses the shaking of that remarkable beauty in the horse, and the flakes of hair which naturally suggest the idea of lightning: but likewise the violent agitation and force of the neck, which in the oriental tongues had been flatly expressed by a metaphor less than this.

"Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?" There is a twofold beauty in this expression which not only marks the courage of this beast, by asking if he can be scared? but likewise raises a noble image of his swiftness, by insinuating, that if he could be frighted, he would bound away with the nimbleness of a grasshopper.

"The glory of his nostrils is terrible." This is more strong and concise than that of Virgil, which yet is the noblest line that was ever written without inspiration:

> "And in his nostrils rolls collected fire."

"He rejoiceth in his strength—He mocketh at fear—neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet—He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha," are signs of courage, as we said before, flowing from an inward principle. There is a peculiar beauty in his "not believing it is the sound of the trumpet;" but when he was sure of it, and is "amongst the trumpets, he saith, Ha, ha:" he neighs, he rejoices. His docility is elegantly painted in his being unmoved at the "rattling quiver, the glittering spear, and the shield;" and is well imitated by Oppian (who undoubtedly read Job as well as Virgil) in his poem upon hunting:

> "How firm the managed war-horse keeps his ground,
> Nor breaks his order, tho' the trumpets sound!
> With fearless eye the glittering host surveys,
> And glares directly at the helmet's blaze!
> The master's word, the laws of war he knows,
> And when to stop, and when to charge the foes."

"He swalloweth the ground," is an expression for prodigious swiftness, in use among the Arabians, Job's countrymen, at this day. It is indeed the boldest and noblest of images for swiftness; nor have we met with anything that comes so near it as Pope's, in "Windsor Forest:"

> "The impatient courser pants in every vein,
> And pawing, seems to beat the distant plain;
> Hills, vales, and floods, appear already cross'd,
> And ere he starts, a thousand steps are lost."

"He smelleth the battle afar off," and what follows about the shouting, is a circumstance expressed with great spirit by Lucan:

> "So when the ring with joyful shouts resounds,
> With rage and pride the imprisoned courser bounds;
> He frets, he foams, he rends his idle rein;
> Springs o'er the fence, and head-long seeks the plain."

Thus incomparably superior is the sacred writer to the profane poets.

AN ECLIPSE IN PERSIA.

A traveller in Persia says, "One night there was an eclipse of the moon, and all the pots, pans, and other sonorous instruments that could be found in Gheelaun, were in requisition to frighten away the beast which was supposed to be devouring the planet. A great deal of gunpowder was also expended, and one might easily have imagined that the town was attacked. Presently our cook, Ismael, commenced a tremendous assault upon a large saucepan, and the other servants discharged their pistols and rifles, much to the assistance of the good cause. At last, after having continued this din for upwards of two hours, the inhabitants retired to rest triumphant, as the beast was effectually alarmed, and had left the moon precisely as he had found it, and round and bright as ever."

* * *

BONDAGE OF THE PASSIONS.—The man who violently hates or ardently loves, cannot avoid being in some degree a slave to the person detested or adored.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, Editor and Proprietor.

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FRUITS OF INFIDELITY.

Some of our readers will not have forgotten the much talked of and written about case of the murderers Mannings, who were executed in London a few years ago. The man confessed his share in the crime, as an accessory, and his confession originated a wide discussion as to the general relation between infidelity and crime. Manning, who was a believer in the Supreme Being, was an unwilling party to the deed for which he lost his life, while his wife, the real perpetrator of the crime, was an avowed atheist. Manning related that when he asked his wife what would become of her soul if she committed an act of murder, she replied—"*We have no soul; after we are dead we are like a lump of clay, and there is no more thought of man.*" It is hard to believe that an intelligent moral being can go so far as to deny the existence of God, and of eternal laws or principles in His government of the Universe, but it is not difficult to believe that if such persons do exist, their denial and non-recognition of God and a Divine government, above and beyond all human governments, removes the most powerful restraint against the indulgence of evil passions and the commission of crime.

France in her past history, reveals how far a nation, denying God and ridiculing religion, can plunge itself into an excess and abandonment of vice and crime. And upon the same principle that a nation, cut loose from all authority save its own impulses, becomes a work of depravity and horror, an individual, in the sphere of his capacity, pursues a similar end. France repenting over her experiment of rejecting God, has come to acknowledge that faith in a Supreme Being and a Divine Government, before whom the acts of men and nations pass in perpetual review, and from whose judgment no human deed can escape, is vital to the strength, prosperity, and happiness of nations and men. Lamartine says, that for the safety and welfare of society belief in God must be not merely a conception, a conviction, a manifest truth, but a *law*, an eternal law—a government. Without this kind of recognition of a Supreme Father and Governor, a people will be absorbed in selfishness, and can have no sense of mutual duties, and no social nor national virtue. Infidelity which destroys God, also destroys humanity.

An examination of the records of crime, and of the characters and sentiments of criminals, leads invariably to the conviction that a vast amount of crime, in its worst forms, results from the infidelity of its perpetrators—from their want of conviction that there is a God, and a Divine Government, and that the soul, immortal, will be subject to that Government in future states of being. Mrs. Manning, disbelieving in God, and the immortality of the soul, thought and sought only to commit a murder so as to escape the penalty of human laws. The eye of Eternal Justice she perceived not; her care was to escape punishment from man this side of the grave. Who cannot see that the greatest of moral restraints was thus lost sight of, and that in regarding life as but a brief, extinguishable spark, she set little value on that of her victim, compared with what it would have assumed had she beheld it destined to immortality, and watched over by the unsleeping eye of a just God—its father. This is a matter that cannot be too well considered, and the more it is examined, the stronger reason every intelligent moral being will find for having a profound conviction of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and a paramount Divine Government, as the best sureties of individual and national virtue.

INCENDIARISM.

Incendiarism is just now carried on to a frightful extent in this city, and nothing can or will check its progress, but a few summary and *terrible* examples being made. There is not a night we place our heads upon our pillows, but we are aroused by the alarm of fire. In other countries such is not the case; in the largest metropolis in the world, London, it is rarely that a conflagration of any magnitude occurs, and weeks will frequently elapse without the slightest token, but in New York it is a constant visitor; the innocent inhabitant is in nightly danger of finding his dwelling wrapped in flames about him, by the torch of the incendiary, and if he escape with life, perhaps it is only to become the victim of poverty. Crime of every degree stalks through our streets with a fearless and daring front, knowing that it is *safe!* from the laxity in the administration of our laws, or that the avenue of escape can be easily procured by the plentiful distribution of lucre.

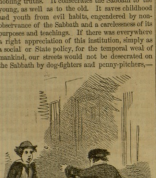
Mrs. Southworth's Statement.—In another column, our readers will find a calm, dignified and convincing statement by Mrs. Southworth, relative to her withdrawal from the Saturday Evening Post, and the attacks of the gentlemen who manage that paper, on her, because she declined to write for their publication, preferring an engagement with the Ledger. Had we been in Mrs. Southworth's place, we should hardly have dignified these parties by taking the slightest notice of them, but when a lady deems it expedient to expose the misrepresentations of men who, so long as they could get her to write for them, extolled her productions, but now, seeing she is engaged to write only for the Ledger, assail her, we cheerfully yield her the use of our columns to set the matter right. She has certainly executed the task in the most delicate and unexceptionable, as well as triumphant manner.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The influence of Sabbath Schools, upon the mental and moral discipline of society, can never be over-estimated. Apart from the religious associations therewith connected, they work an incalculable good in training the mind to habits of thought and reflection, and giving systematic and healthy action to its tendencies and powers. Of the great statesmen of our country, most have been associated with Sabbath Schools. Who can tell how mightily the lives and actions of these great intellects were stimulated by such training.

The Sabbath School is one of the happiest and divinest ideas that has been evolved by Christianity. It is purely a Christian institution, seeking to educate and lead the young mind in pursuit of the good, the beautiful, and the true. No one need fear a counterbalance of its lofty moral influence, through any sectarianism the child may receive from it. Parents can send their children to the Sabbath School of the church they sympathize with. It is not an exclusive or dictatorial institution. The Catholic and the Protestant—Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers and Unitarians, have established and endorsed it with the same hope and faith in its beneficence.

Apart from the educational influence it exerts, it rears a moral wall around society, by bringing the rising generation in contact with high and ennobling truths. It consecrates the Sabbath to the young, as well as to the old. It saves childhood and youth from evil habits, engendered by non-observance of the Sabbath and a carelessness of its purposes and teachings. If there was everywhere a right appreciation of this institution, simply as a social or State policy, for the temporal weal of mankind, our streets would not be desecrated on the Sabbath by dog-fighters and penny-pitchers,—and the latter, by the way, are constantly increasing in numbers. Knots of idle and dissipated youths would not stand at the street-corners on Sunday, making the air foul with their profanity and obscenity. Do Christians, do parents, or whatever guardians and well-wishers of society, sufficiently ponder this subject, and reflect that there are an hundred thousand children and youth in this great city who might, and ought, to be *all* brought under the benign influence of the Sabbath School?



IS IT A CURSE?

Awhile ago, we heard an aristocratic denizen of one of our up-town fashionable streets, in an address to an approving audience of his own class, declare that the cheap, independent press was a curse to society—that *it filled the heads of the poor with ideas which unfitted them for common labor.* There were, we are glad to say, some few persons present who had the sense and manliness to scorn both the speaker and his sentiments, which they did in a most audible manner. Of all the mean, deformed things attaching to society, this miserable, sneering aristocracy, sprung from filth and fraud, and arrogant as it is worthless and shallow, is the most degrading and contemptible. The nobility of genius, talent, virtue, or whatever is intrinsically excellent in man, is true and agreeable to the spirit of the American people, and can never fail to distinguish its possessors; but this canting of superiority because of a little more of this world's goods than is held by the mass of society, is only worthy universal derision.

No wonder these bogus nobility deprecate the influence of the cheap, independent press—which has a habit of teaching the masses, who toil and sweat that the earth may bring forth its fruits, that they are the real nobility of the human race, and that with the intelligence which it is their pleasure and right to glean from such a press, they are, in the sight of God and humanity, not a whit lower or less than kings, cotton lords, or commercial nabobs. Doctrines of this kind frighten these aristocrats, who cannot bear to have the tinsel stripped from their characters, and who fear contact with the intelligent newspaper-reading masses. The accumulation of wealth is creditable if it be not made a mountain to obscure and crush the less fortunate, but it gives no just title to nobility.

"The *rank* is but the *guinea's stamp*,
The *man's* the *gold* for all that."

A WORD TO THE WISE.

Some of our daily journals are in the habit of denouncing the publication of stories and novelettes in weekly papers; under the plea that they vitiate the public taste. This may be true as regards the coarse and immoral stories which a certain class of weekly papers take delight in, but the complaint is totally inapplicable to the pure and high-toned productions which are so widely circulated by the respectable weekly press. There is a kind of "literature," however, that is unspeakably filthy and corrupting, and our daily cotemporaries ought to attend to its suppression, as in that case their "sphere of usefulness" would *be confined to their own columns.* We refer to the nauseous reports of criminal trials for crimes unmentionable in a high-toned family paper like the Ledger, with which the daily journals so eagerly and so habitually beslime themselves. How the head of any respectable family can permit daily papers that make it a practice to publish these indecent reports to be introduced into his house, is more than we can account for. It ought not so to be.

Our Paper.—Every one who has enjoyed the society of the Ledger by the fireside must have felt happier and better for its perusal. To instruct, to amuse, to advocate a high standard of pure morality, and to cherish all the better feelings of the heart, is its mission. Nothing is admitted to its pages that can wound the feelings of the most sensitive, or call a blush to the cheek of the most modest. Children may read it with pleasure and profit, and we wish to make the oldest, wisest and best in the community confess their obligations to us for many pleasant, well-spent hours.

FRESH FERN LEAVES.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1855, by Robert Bonner, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

TABITHA TROT'S SOLILOQUY OVER HER TEA.

Such airs as married women put on! advertising their happiness to the public; one would think nobody else was of any account. I am sure I never could find out why *I* was not married. I have seen scores of worse-looking women, with babies in their arms. Yes—such a fuss as married women make! See them on a journey—in the cars, taking off their travelling bonnets, and laying their heads in such a provokingly confiding way on their husbands' shoulders, and pretending to go to sleep. A husband is well enough, I suppose, but I have managed to live fort—— I mean thirty years without one. Then they say that married women preserve their good looks much longer than single ones;—now, that is a joke—as if any woman who lived such a hurry-skurrying life—but there's no use in arguing the point; everybody knows how plump, and fresh-looking, and sweet-tempered old maids are; not that I am an old maid—and speaking of that, I'd like to inquire where's the propriety of calling every *unmarried* woman an old maid. I am sure I am not old. If I were seventy now, they might talk; and I am not "set" in my ways either. To be sure, always when I return from walking, I wrap my parasol carefully in a sheet of tissue paper; and I carry my fingers as straight as I can, without getting the cramp, lest bending them should wear my gloves out; and I put my shoes side by side, near an open window at night, on a chair, to air; and always examine the sheets before getting into bed, to see if the seam is exactly in the middle; but, then, I am not an old maid, and nobody has any right to call me so. I'd like, at any rate, to see the man I'd marry. Some women take up with any thing, and some fairly ask the men to marry 'em, or what I consider as good. There's Miss Cox, now; she left a good millinery business and took up making gentlemen's stocks, for nothing else, under the sun, but to get married. She invented a new way to fasten stocks, just for an excuse to show her gentlemen customers how to put them round their necks; that's the way *she* became Mrs. Spring. Then there was Miss Jives, who advertised right-out and out for a husband, and got him, too! I hope he may never remind her of it, some day, when his dinner don't suit him; that's all I have to say. And Mrs. Gore, too, she that was a Flounder; she fixed her eye on our rosy young sexton; and pretended she lost her breast-pin, in church, of a Sunday, and got him to take the key, of a week-day, and help her to go look for it, and a long search they made of it, too. Do you think I, Tabitha Trot, would ever resort to such tricks?——Never! I had rather live an old maid till I dried up like a piece of parchment, and blew away for want of somebody to hold me. Good gracious! if there isn't deacon Sharp, the widower. I really think it would be but common politeness to run down and inquire after the dear children.

Fanny Fern.

EXHORTATION.

Among the pitfalls in our way
The best of us walk blindly,—
O man, be wary! watch and pray,
And judge your brother kindly.

Help back his feet, if they have slid,
Nor count him still your debtor,
Perhaps the very wrong he did
Has made yourself the better.

Alice Cary.

TO ALL INTERESTED.

As, in consequence of my final withdrawal from all connection with the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post, its Editors have published a statement designed to place my late relations with that paper in a false aspect, I proceed to set the matter right by laying before the public the whole correspondence upon the subject—premising that having been importuned by Mr. Henry Peterson to write a novelette for the Post, I had given a verbal and *conditional* promise to do so. The letters tell the rest.

[*To Henry Peterson, Ed. Sat. Eve. Post.*]
Prospect Cottage, January 29th, 1857.

Dear Mr. Peterson:—I had confidently expected to have, before this date, furnished you with a short novelette. But the state of my health, for the last three months, has scarcely enabled me to finish commenced work. And now that I am something better, I find the first of February at hand, when my written contract with the New York Ledger, made some months ago, begins to take effect. Its terms preclude the possibility of my writing a novelette for any other paper; therefore it becomes my duty to request you to withdraw my name from the list of your contributors. With the kindest feelings, I remain, Yours, respectfully,

Emma D. E. N. Southworth.

To this communication I received the following rude reply:

[*To Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.*]
Philadelphia, Feb. 9, 1857.

We had no *written* agreement with Mrs. Southworth, but we had supposed that the word of a lady was as good as her bond—especially one so long connected with us. We have published far and wide, in conformity with Mrs. Southworth's promise, that a story of a certain length would be written for us. No after arrangement of Mrs. Southworth could affect her arrangement with us. We must therefore insist upon the performance of said promise. Respectfully,

Deacon & Peterson.

This letter deserved no answer and received none. Nearly two months passed, during which the Editors of the Post still kept my name in their prospectus, when, near the last of March, Mr. Bonner announced my exclusive engagement with the New York Ledger, which drew from Mr. Peterson the following letter:

[*To Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth.*]
Philadelphia, March 31st, 1857.

Mrs. Southworth:—I have received no reply as yet to my last letter. I now wish to know whether you positively refuse to comply with your engagements to us, and through us to a large portion of the public. As the New York Ledger has had the impudence to state that no other paper has any authority to announce you as its contributor, we shall be compelled to attend to this matter in our next paper. We wish you to state therefore, in as many words, whether you have authorized the impudence and the falsehood of the Ledger. Yours, Henry Peterson.

Now, this unmanly letter merited no more notice than its predecessor, yet as it asked a question, I answered temperately, as follows:

[*To Henry Peterson, Ed. Sat. Eve. Post.*]
Prospect Cottage, Georgetown, D. C.,
Wednesday, April 1st, 1857.

Dear Mr. Peterson:—My contract with Mr. Bonner gives him the right to make the announcement referred to

I have broken no faith with you; if a *conditional* promise has failed of effect the fault lies in the *imposed conditions.*

I refer you to my letter of January 29th.

Yours, truly, E. D. E. N. Southworth.

Thus ended our correspondence.

I never purposely injured the Post, yet in consequence of this, my determined withdrawal from its connection, Messrs Deacon and Peterson in their statement in the Post, have cunningly and covertly assailed my truthfulness as a woman, and my reputation as a writer. Any one may see at once the motive of the attack this pair of gentlemen have made upon a woman who never injured them, unless she has inadvertently done so in leaving the Post for the Ledger.

Now, let the public compare the above correspondence with the statement made by Messrs. Deacon and Peterson, and draw their own conclusions.

Emma D. E. N. Southworth.

Prospect Cottage, April 10th, 1857.

A BAD FASHION.

It has become the fashion now-a-days to abuse, and depreciate, and renounce, almost, this great, good world in which we live. It is a bad fashion, and I wish I could see any signs of its going out. I, for one, confess that even my dreams are based upon the possibilities of this dim speck that men call earth. I would not have wings grow upon my shoulders to-day nor to-morrow, if a wish could produce them; my present powers of locomotion being, when in healty condition, very happily adapted to my needs.

A fine equipage is desirable enough, but may be obtained within the limits of this visible, diurnal sphere, and should it even be denied us, why, we can manage very well without it. There is no need that we should travel very far, to learn a good deal, most of us—the grass and flowers in our door-yards—the woods on the next hill, putting on and taking off their green dresses, nodding to the winds, and all day making love to the twilight—the birds mating and building their snug little houses without measuring-lines, without study of architecture—all these have a great deal to say to us that we might hear with profit.

Our neighbor that we look down upon, because he enters his house by wooden steps, perhaps, has seen sights and thought thoughts that we have not seen nor imagined. If we should show him a little friendliness, he would give us such payment as all our money could not buy for us. I think there would be less outcry against the world if we were fit to live in it—less pining for great spectacles and shows if we had eyes to see the pictures that are painted anew for us every day in the morning and evening sky.

Ah! me, there is many a Peter Bell of whom it might be said just as truly as of the veritable one—

"In vain through every changeful year
Did nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

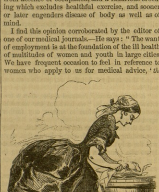
If it were not for the grand interpreters that here and there stand between the dull, grovelling herd and nature, the marvel of her affluence, the charm of her endless variety would be all unrecognized.

"On a fair prospect some have looked
And felt, as I have heard them say,
As if the moving time had been
A thing as steadfast as the scene
On which they gazed themselves away."

But the many, I am afraid, have looked on fair prospects, and have not seen them at all. So much depends upon our moods, to say nothing of our capacities.

I meet very often young men and women careless of health, careless of pleasure—of the world and all it can give, in fact, and I know of no sadder sight. They are fretful and peevish, melancholy and listless by turns—looking out upon the beautiful sunshine, and counting it less than the chaff of vanity. This is all wrong and needless too, I think, for it arises, in nine cases out of ten, from absence of occupation, and a luxurious breeding which excludes healthful exercise, and sooner or later engenders disease of body as well as of mind.

I find this opinion corroborated by the editor of one of our medical journals.—He says: "The want of employment is at the foundation of the ill health of multitudes of women and youth in large cities. We have frequent occasion to feel in reference to women who apply to us for medical advice, '*the best medicine for you is the wash-tub, at fifty cents a day.*'"



I think of several idle, moping, discontented women among my acquaintances, for whom I believe this novel prescription would prove highly efficacious. "What *do* you do with the time?" they ask, when they come to see me; "arn't you bored to death with the old amusements? there really is nothing worth living for any more!"

Another class of unprofitable sinners, and one that is on the increase among us, is that which wears mortality as a burden. The flesh of countless individuals is actually consumed by yearnings for a better life, as if God would ever build up a beautiful spiritual life upon the miserable, rotten foundations they are laying here.

We ourselves have something to do; and if we don't do it, and won't do it, so much the worse for us, that is all. We can't have happiness crammed into us; we must receive it by the natural and provided processes; and the simplest and easiest method of getting good that I know of, is doing good. We do not estimate properly the treasures and pleasures of this world. We finger the moth, and smell the sweetness out of the rose, and then complain that the one has lost its lustre, and the other its scent: fine things must be finely treated; and we defeat ourselves by our vulgar greediness and rudeness.

The swine will keep in the hollow—wallow in the mire, and growl and bite, no matter what violet banks lie along the hillsides; and certain men and women will keep in the dark, hug their little sorrows, and drag down to their dead level and live off, from, and out of, every healthier nature they can fasten upon. The sunshine is waiting to wrap itself about them, but they will not see it—the cisterns of the air stand cool and open, but they remain a hungry generation—the rivers flow by their very doors, but they will not wash and be clean.

It is not heaven they desire, if they only knew it, but a more, just appreciation of the excellent beauty of this present world.

Alice Cary.

Opposition.—Go, thoughtless children of wealth; go where funeral-piles mark the resting-place of your ancestry! Go where sculptured effigies and lonely mounds rest side by side! Go—pause—reflect!—will ye, *dare* ye oppress the poor?

CURRENT ITEMS.

A gentleman named Raye, living near Philadelphia, hearing a great cackling among his poultry one day, a short time since, went out into the yard to see what was the matter. On arriving at the poultry-yard he discovered that a large black snake had seized a hen and was trying to squeeze her to death in his coils. After considerable fluttering and cackling, the other fowls, led on by a large rooster, attacked the serpent, apparently for the purpose of rescuing the hen, and pecked him so severely that he soon began to show signs of discomfort, and finally released his intended victim and fled; whereupon, the hens and roosters set up a great cackling and crowing of triumph, and then gathered around their rescued companion in seeming sympathy and congratulation.

An Ohio paper gives an account of a dreadful accident that recently occurred in a "Sugar-bush" in that State. A number of persons were engaged in making maple sugar, and several large kettles of the syrup were boiling over a fire, above which they were suspended on a pole, either end of which rested on an upright crotched stick. One of the men, in a moment of thoughtlessness, struck one of these upright sticks with his axe; and either the stick being defective or the blow heavier than he intended, the support gave way, and the kettles were precipitated to the ground and upset; and a little girl was so burned with the hot syrup (which was splashed all over her) that she soon died in unspeakable agony.

Recent arrivals from Utah bring the most appalling accounts of the state of society in that indescribable Sodom. The "elders" constantly enlarge their harems, that have become the curse of every mother and the shame of every daughter, and the tyranny and cruelty which these wholesale debauchees exhibit in their relations with the victims of their passions and rapacity, have become utterly unspeakable. It is feared by many that the respectable inhabitants of the Pacific shore will at last become so filled with wrath at these monsters in iniquity as to rise in arms and attempt their extirpation; in which case will be enacted one of the bloodiest dramas this continent has yet witnessed.

Two young men, named Pendleton and Drain, a short time since got into a dispute, in Winston, Maryland, which resulted in a challenge and an agreement to fight with Bowie knives, the parties to be *nailed down by their pantaloons to a heavy plank, within arm's length of each other.* Thus situated, they commenced the horrid butchery, and kept it up until Drain was mortally wounded, and Pendleton also so terribly injured that it is doubtful if he will recover.

A young man named Rogan recently died in Albany from poison communicated, from hides he was handling, to his system, through a pimple on his face, which he rubbed while his hands were soiled by the hides. The pimple first began to swell; then his face; next his head, and then his body as far down as his waist. At the time of his death, his head had swelled to the size of a half-bushel, his face was dreadfully distorted, and he suffered the most agonizing pain.

The New York Crystal Palace which cost $750,000, is now offered for sale, to the city, for $150,000. Let the city buy the Palace and preserve it as the handsomest edifice that has ever been or probably ever will be erected on the Western Continent. Let the city buy it;—if it don't we may be tempted to purchase it ourselves, and turn it into a grand printing office.

An expedition has been set on foot in Georgia to drain the celebrated Okefenokee Swamp, on the supposition that the land thus reclaimed would be of exceeding value, and the healthfulness of the surrounding country greatly improved. The enterprize will doubtless be looked upon with great disfavor by the anacondas and alligators, unless they can come in for a share of—the laborers.

A young farmer living in the western part of this State, a few days since ran away with another man's wife; but in the hurry of preparation he left his pocket-book in his "other pantaloons," containing $685, which the bereaved husband took in exchange for his faithless spouse; and he thinks he made a capital bargain.

King Bomba of Naples, the butcher-monarch of Italy, has conferred the Cross of Francis I.—the highest decoration of the kingdom—upon a police agent, for having *invented a new instrument of torture,* which at last accounts was being "tried on" Bomba's subjects with great success.

Sergeant Louis Albaugh, of the First Regiment New York Volunteers, recently died, much lamented, in Philadelphia, from the lingering effects of a severe wound received in the battle of Churubusco, where he behaved with great gallantry.

It is said that over one million pounds of maple sugar have been made this year in Chatauque county alone.

WIT AND HUMOR.

The Rights of Woman.—The following may be adduced as just a few of the privileged Rights of Woman—to wit:—A gentleman's Right arm, the Right-hand sid eof a carriage, and always the Right side of an argument. To the above may be thrown in as peculiar Rights that Woman perhaps understands, and decidedly adorns, a thousand times better than Man, viz.: the Rites of Hospitality and the Rites of Hymen. Though, to speak impartially, the Wrongs of Hymen (as witness our police reports) fall to poor Woman's share almost as frequently as the Rites.

A lady in this city told a freshly imported servant-maid to cut off "ten yards" of a piece of muslin just brought home, while she (the lady) attended to a visitor. On returning to the sitting-room, she found that the girl had cut off "ten yards" sure enough, and each yard in a separate piece. The same girl, on being told by the family physician (to whom her mistress had sent her for a prescription) to get a portion of saltpetre, got a lot of *torpedos*, which she told her mistress were to be taken three times a day.

A Losing Article.—A correspondent calculates that, during the course of his long existence, he must have lent, or missed, or lost, or had borrowed or stolen, not less than 500 umbrellas! Experience has taught him now, having charged rather dearly for her 500 lessons, never to buy, as long as he lives another umbrella! He classifies umbrellas under the *head* of those articles of which no one ever knows the profit, much less the *return!*

Forensic Eloquence.—"May it please the honorable court and gentlemen of the jury, the defendant in this case, wilfully and maliciously, with all the fury of a fiend emerged from the wild wilderness, with all the terrific frenzy of a roaring lion, and with his gigantic strength did then and there seize my inoffensive client by the collar—and tore his shirt!"

Dominico, the renowned harlequin, going to see Louis XIV. at supper, fixed his eye on a dish of partridges. The king, who was fond of his acting, said, "Give that dish to Dominico" "And the partridges, too, sire?" Louis, penetrating into the artfulness of the question, replied, "And the partridges, too." The dish was gold.

A lady who spent most of her time in running from neighbor's to neighbor's, was suddenly taken ill at home, and in great alarm sent her husband for a physician. The good man after hastening on his way a few rods, returned to the house and naively asked his wife, "My dear, where shall I and the doctor *find* you, on my return?"

An English paper winds up an eloquent article on the evils of war by declaring that "England has never lost so many men by disease as by *bottles!*" The compositor who changed the *a* of "battles" to the *o* of "bottles" did not thereby much diminish the truthfulness of the declaration.

It has been said that Lord Palmerston wanted to pick a quarrel with China. But if, as must be admitted, the noble Viscount knows better than to quarrel with his *bread-and-butter*, is it likely that he would be disposed to quarrel with his *tea?*

A cotemporary says the opera house in this city was so crowded on a recent occasion, there was not room for the audience to laugh in, and that several persons had their sides badly bruised in making an unsuccessful attempt.

When a person commended very zealously the piety of the Emperor Alexander, the uncle of the present Emperor of Russia, an American who was present remarked, "Yes, sir, a *very* good man; very devout; no doubt he said grace before he swallowed Poland."

The Cruellest Cut of All.—When Clarendon was disgraced, the beautiful Duchess of Clarendon, who hated him, and had wrought his ruin, hissed and hooted as he passed. The earl turned round, and said, calmly, "Madam, if you live, *you'll grow old.*"

A Knot Easily Untied.—A young lady engaged to be married, and getting sick of her bargain, applied to a friend to help her to untie the knot before it was too late. "Oh, certainly," he replied; "it's very easy to untie it now, while it is only a *beau* knot."

A Strict Parishioner.—A melting sermon being preached in a country church, all fell a weeping but one man, who being asked why he did not weep with the rest—"Oh," said he, "I belong to another parish."

It is the decided opinion of all the American residents at Hong Kong, that Mr. Allum, the baker, who poisoned the bread, is, or was before he was shot, the greatest *loafer* in existence.

"SO TIBNI DIED, AND OMRI REIGNED."

1st of Kings, 16th and 22nd.

BY MRS. L. H. SIGOURNEY.

The high-toned boy rebell'd at rule,
And wildly wish'd at home and school
For that good time, so grand and free,
When he should his own master be.
The years roll'd on, he struck his tent,
And forth to seek his future went;
But piercing thorns his way enclos'd,
And iron tasks the world imposed,
With tireless toil his sinews tried,
And oft the just reward denied,
While he in bitterness exclaimed
Though *Tibni died, yet Omri reign'd.*

By Pleasure's wiles the youth was led,
And health declined, and honor fled,
Till in the frenzy of despair
He rose and broke the syren's snare.
But next, with nature sear'd and cold,
His manhood bow'd to lust of gold,
Till sleepless care and fraudful art
Wore out in spots, the wearied heart
Still trampling down with madness blind
All generous feeling for his kind;
At each career was Conscience pain'd,
If *Tibni died*, or *Omri reign'd.*

So, when we quell with contrite woe
Some sin that kept our spirits low,
Permit us not, the God of grace,
To take another in its place,
And changing but the idol's name,
Still yield to vanity and shame,
Even like the Lord that swept away
In fields of blood, a tyrant's sway,
Yet took, by maddening folly led,
Another despot in his stead,
Nor wisdom from its sorrows gain'd,
For *Tibni died*, and *Omri reign'd.*

THE WIFE'S CONQUEST.

A TALE OF MYSTERY AND RETRIBUTION.

BY WILLIAM HENRY ERSKINE.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1857, by ROBERT BONNER, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New York.

CHAPTER III.

The young fugitive from the French ship found a happy home, and confiding and loving hearts, beneath the roof of Ambrose the fisherman. Every day made him dearer to them, and when a month had passed without any inquiries having been made about him, they began to feel that God had sent him to them to be their child, and as such their hearts regarded him.

As for the lad, Vivien, he could not express sufficiently his gratitude to his preservers, and by a hundred ways of love he sought to please them. He was a boy formed by nature to win the love and gentleness of all around him. Even the old skipper, gray-bearded Diggon, who was never known to love anything but his smack, took kindly to him, and taught him how to distinguish the ropes, the names of the sails, and of all other parts of the vessel. He also taught him to steer, to row, to bait a hook, and even to splice.

With cheerfulness, and a willing heart, Vivien learned all these things, and became expert in all that was taught him. Ambrose taught him English every evening, seated in the door, after the day's work, and Mary plied her needle with double diligence, to make him clothes; not fine ones, but coarse and suited to their station. His beauty, his sweetness of temper, his fearlessness, young as he was, his docility and readiness to oblige them, made them so proud of him, and so won upon these humble people, that to have parted with him, after he had been with them the first month would have been one of the deepest afflictions that could befall them both.

"Heaven has given him to us, Ambrose, and I daily pray that we may be permitted to keep him as our child."

"But, perhaps," he said to her, "Mary, my wife, dear, we ought not so to pray; for perhaps he has a mourning mother, from whose arms we keep him! If we love him so, how must his parents love him, though he is not!"

"I did not think of them, Ambrose, in my own selfish love for the dear, manly, little boy. I would be very reluctant to give him up, even to his mother; yet I will try and pray for the future, that his mother may be found, and that God would restore him to her embrace."

"That is the better prayer, wife! But I have no idea that his parents will ever be known."

"Ought not some steps be taken to find them, husband? It would not be honest to keep silence."

"Our silence may be the child's safety, and preservation from the foes who seek his life. If we should make known every where, in the newspapers, perhaps before his parents could hear of him, his enemies might be upon our unprotected home and tear him from us. For the present, let us be secret and silent, and trust to God in his own good time to unfold the mystery which surrounds him. It must have been, from all I can understand, (with my poor French,) when he was four or five years old, he was carried off from that handsome home he describes, to England; and that at least, four or five years, he has been in the hands of wicked people, hired to keep him from France; but who at last seemed to have got weary of their charge, and resolved to destroy him. But Heaven on that night sent me to his rescue; and I accept with gratitude, the gift as from above. If we make known his safety, they will know it, who seek his life, and he is lost!"

"I will keep it secret as my own soul, dear Ambrose. But Diggon?"

"Is a man who never speaks but when he can't help it. Besides, he knows his story, and would defend the boy with his life, I doubt not."

"Wasn't he seen by Mr. Shenstone, when you landed there, the night you came home with him?" she asked, timidly.

"Perhaps so; but he paid no attention to him, and perhaps supposed it was the boy, Mark Skellton. But I saw the pretty child Isabel, looking closely at him, and that he looked closely at her, with eyes bright with admiration and pleasure."

"No one could help admiring this lovely little lady. I wish her solemn looking father, who keeps her like a singing-bird, in a cage, would let her come over to the island. It would be so pleasant for Vivien to have a play-mate."

"She is too far above us for that, wife."

"Perhaps above us, but not above this noble boy. Do you know, I am quite sure he has a great name and family, if it was only known!"

"Perhaps so; certainly he is above the rank we hold, wife, and that in which, as our child, he will be reared up!"

"Oh, I wish we could bring him up like a rich man's son."

"Perhaps he would be happier to be brought up as ours! Riches are not happiness, Mary. Look at Mr. Shenstone! Was there ever a more unhappy man—judging from his looks and the lone way he lives!"

"But people *whisper*, Ambrose, that——"

"St, wife! Never say what people whisper. Whispers are too often the hisses of the serpent, Envy. It may be or not, that he has done great evil in the past, and that what rumor says about his treatment of his dead wife, Isabel's beauteous mother, Heaven rest her soul! is more or less true. If he has been a bad man, he is perhaps now suffering for it, so far as we can suffer, this side the grave. It all, however, still shows us that wealth does not bring peace. Let Vivien be as a son would have been to us. I shall teach him my craft, and to be an honest man."

"And I will teach him to fear God, and read the Bible, and love us as if we were his own parents. But, Ambrose, what do you think of the chain of gold?"

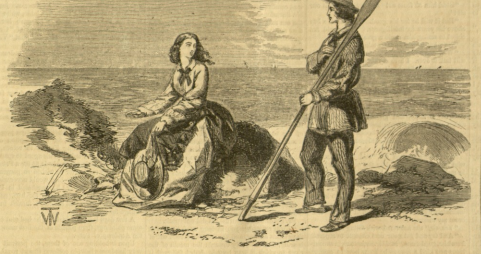
"I have thought a great deal about it. It may lead to the ultimate discovery of his parents."

"It may, as he says that it was given him by his mother, at least by a sweet, fair lady, whom he thinks was his mother; and that there was a picture of her to it."

"It was broken off and lost, the night he was in the water. If we could have had that, there might be some hopes of knowing who he was! What I wonder at is, that he should have been allowed to retain it; but he says that when they were attempting to deprive him of it, he so shrieked, and cried, and battled for it, that without cutting it from his neck, they could not possess themselves of it, and he was suffered to retain it. He says the little locket was on his breast when he sprang overboard, but was gone when he found himself in the cuddy of the smack! The chain is peculiar, and would be recognized by any one who had once seen it; besides, on three of the links are engraved three letters of some kind, unknown to me!"

"I was looking at them! They look to me, Ambrose, like the letters in the Greek Bible our minister carries in his pocket."

"Perhaps so!"



AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

At this moment the subject of their conversation came running up to them, as they sat in the door, Ambrose smoking, and Mary knitting, as they talked. His face was unusually animated and glowing, while he eagerly held up in his hand something from which the evening sun was reflected in sparkles.

"What has Vivien found?" cried the wife of Ambrose, laying down her needles, and half-rising to meet Vivien.

"My portraite! Ma belle mere!" he exclaimed.

"His mother's picture," said Ambrose quickly. "He has found it!"

"Where?" cried the delighted Mary.

"In the petite chambre—in the cuddee!" he answered, holding up to them a miniature set in gold, and about the size of a five-franc piece, though of oval shape.

"I found it in a corner of the cuddy, master," said Diggon, coming after him, up from the boat. "I was looking for an old sinker, feelin' about, an' my hand lit on this thing. Fiffin snatched it from me as soon as I held it up, and said it was his mother's picture! It looks like the angels I've heard on!"

"It is ma mere, ma belle maman, my good maman!" he cried, with features shining with exquisite joy.

He held it before the eyes of Mary, who gazed on it with murmurs of delight, saying—

"It is like an angel, to be sure!"

"And *where* did *you* ever see an angel, wife?" asked Ambrose, with a smile, as he laid aside his short pipe, and advanced to look.

"I only guess how they look, and after the sight of this, I shall never think of angels but they will look like this face!"

It was indeed a face of beauty, and deserving such praise as her warm words conveyed. It represented, in a locket, set with pearls, a female about twenty years of age, with a countenance that Eve might have owned without detracting from the creative excellency of the divine Hand from which she came, "good." Eyes of rich auburn, cheeks like the flush of a summer sun-set cloud, golden hair like a tiara of glory, lips that were roses of love, a snow-white neck and bosom, where all delicious charms swam upon an undulating sea of delight. Her head was superbly poised, and wore a noble air of aristocratic symmetry and high-born pride; yet the sweet and noble face was full of goodness and gentleness. The costume was that of court ladies, in the reign of Charles X., and what struck both the eyes of Ambrose and Mary at the same moment, quite as much as her refined beauty, was the similitude of the gold chain and picture upon the swan-like throat, daintily copied by the painter.

"Do you see it, Ambrose?"

"Yes, the very same chain, but not the same picture!"

"Of course not! How could the painter copy the picture which he was himself just painting; but the chain was on her neck. Perhaps, afterwards, she hung this picture to it and put it about Vivien's neck!"

"It must have been so."

"Ma mamau! Marie, Ambrose! It is my mama. I am so happy—again it to find!"

"It must have been broken off when I was lifting him into the smack out of the water, and fell into the cuddy," said Ambrose, "where it has been out of sight for four weeks, until this time. That accounts for the broken ring on the locket."

Vivien was so overjoyed at recovering this portrait, that he could not contain his delight. He could scarcely let them look at it, he took it away so often to press it to his lips.

"Ma mere! Ma prettie mother!"

We will now go back for a few moments, with the power of ubiquity that appertains to story writers, to the French ship, which lays at anchor in the East River.

The boat which left her side to rescue the fugitive, after rowing about in every direction, for twenty minutes, was recalled on board, by a voice from the deck.

"No signs of him, sir?" answered the officer in command of the cutter, as he came up the side. "He evidently sunk as soon as he struck the water. Poor child, what could have induced him to spring overboard!"

The captain of the vessel made no reply, but ordering the boat to be hoisted up, walked aft. A tall, sinister-faced man drew near to his side, and said in a low voice,—

"You can bear witness, Captain, that he destroyed himself. I had no hand in it."

"Monsieur! What excuses are these? Did you not half an hour ago say you were instructed to destroy the lad? And now you try to clear yourself, when he has taken his own life into his hands! Is it not enough that he is dead?"

"If I were *sure* of it! But—you perceive, Captain, that I am not *sure* he is dead! If I had done the deed, I could have reported to my employers that all was right. But I did not see him sink. Did you?"

"Monsieur Le Voissier, I am no executioner! I am disgusted with you and this business. Had I known they contemplated sending him to this country in my ship, to destroy him, I would not have had part in it."

"You could not, you know, have refused. You, and all dear to you, are in the Duke's power; and your refusal would have brought evil on all whom you love—your wife and little ones. For debt, Sir Captain, is bondage. The Duke held you in his power!"

The captain groaned. He walked the deck in silence. At length he turned and said abruptly, and almost fiercely,—

"What is the Duke's object in persecuting this poor child, (now safe in God's Heaven,) Monsieur? You were his steward. You act with orders."

"But I am not in my lord's confidence, Monsieur Capitaine. His gold buys me, and I ask no questions. I did not mean to destroy the child; but to desert it on the shore of this New World. For this purpose I went into the cabin, intending to take him to land, but first resolved to remove from him every sign by which he might be recognized, especially that gold chain and picture he clung so distractedly to. But he darted overboard with it upon his neck, and is drowned with it. What I fear is, that the body may be found, and that this may lead to trouble for all parties. These Americans have such a way of blazoning every detail of an affair in the papers. In this case, I should never have courage to return to France."

"Nor should you in my ship. Duke or devil, I care not, you go ashore in the morning!"

"Why, you will not leave me in a strange country?"

"Were you not but now about to leave the noble child, Vivien, there, to perish or be lost among the crowd of pauperism? and Heaven has, in its mercy, only saved you from this crime. You go on shore, sir, at day-dawn," said the captain, in emphatic French, in which language they conversed. "If I had known all I know now of the Duke's vil——"

"Beware, sir! You are forgetful that your little home in France is on his domain, and that you owe him more than your gains for seven years can repay; and that if I report to him what you say, your wife and little ones will be beggars."

The frank and generous-hearted sailor bit his lip until he suffered with the pain.

"Yes—I doubt not that you would report. But I shall be in France as soon as you. You go not in my ship. I detest an assassin!"

"You were a party to——"

"Never! I knew not all the villainy of this thing when I was directed by the Duke's letter to receive on board two persons, one of whom was obnoxious to him. I did not know until we had been many days a-sea that the child was——"

Here a sudden exclamation from the side of the ship led the captain to look over to see what discovery had been made.

"It is only his cap, sir," answered the man, lifting it with an oar into the air, and casting it, dripping, upon the deck.

"You see, Monsieur Le Voissier! This is all! The child is drowned! But I am clear of his blood. Noble and innocent boy! When I learned from him his sad tale, that he was the victim of——"

"Monsieur will commit himself," said the tall, dark man, with a sneer.

"Sacre! If I were on the open sea I would hang you at the yard-arm. Ho. there! my cutter!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Take this person into the boat and land him at the first pier. Two of you pitch overboard his valise and trunks after him."

"Monsieur Capitaine!"

"Not a word of remonstrance. Go!"

"You shall suffer for this, if I ever step foot in France again."

"I will despise your threats, coquin! My ship shall no longer hold an assassin! If that dear boy had not sacrificed himself to-night to his fears, I intended, I say it plainly, to rescue him from your power! Because a French sailor owes money to his landlord is no reason he should sell his honor. Away! Peste! Begone!"

The person addressed, who, in his air and looks, was an illustration of cunning and villainy, half drew his sword, for in rank he was sufficiently allied to the rank of gentlemen to wear one. The fiery and indignant captain at once took it from him, broke it across his knee, and cast, with an expression of contempt, the two pieces into the sea.

"You shall feel my revenge!" said the French hireling, with savage mouthing of his menacing words.

"I despise you! Help Monsieur to the boat."

M. Le Voissier, to avoid the hands of two of the sailors, ready to grasp him by the shoulders, scowling upon the captain, went over the side into the boat, which at once rowed with him to the shore.

"Did you land him?" demanded the French captain of the officer of the boat, as it returned to the ship.

"On the nighest pier-head, sir."

"There let him go! My ship is well rid of a murderer. Think you the poor lad was drowned?" he asked, sorrowfully, and without any hope in his tones.

"He could not have floated, or we should have seen him sir, by the blue-lights."

"And if any boat had picked him up, we should have been hailed. He has, without doubt, perished! Well, he is taken from tears, and trouble, and evil hands. It is as natural for children to go up to their Maker, as for the bright stars to rise into the sky in the east."

The captain continued for a time to pace the deck, and when two bells of the middle watch were struck, first on board of a man-of-war near, and then on his own forecastle, he descended into his cabin.

We now return to the island, and the chain of gold and locket. Mary, as well as Ambrose, aware fully of the light which these two articles might some day cast upon the mystery hanging around Vivien, got him to give them into their charge to guard safely.

"But you will let me see ma belle maman, every day?" he asked, affectionately.

"Yes, as often as you will, Vivien; but will you also call me 'ma?'"

"Oh! yes. You are my bonne mere! I love you—I love Ambrose beaucoup. You will never no more let the bad man have Vivien?"

"Do not fear him. You will see him no more," said Ambrose, kindly and firmly.

"Then I will love only you," said the fair boy, embracing and kissing them.

In a few weeks Ambrose had taught him to speak English almost altogether, he having had much knowledge of it before. He took him with him in his fishing excursions; but was careful never to suffer him to go up with him to the city, nor to land upon the main.

At length life flowed peacefully, and as usual, on. Mary and Ambrose had got as accustomed to Vivien as if he were their son; and he as familiar with their life as if he had known no other. We are creatures of habit; and the present forces itself upon our attention more forcibly than what belonged to the past. Gray-bearded Diggon seemed to feel towards the cheerful lad as if he had known him from a babe, and Vivien felt himself as much domesticated and at home as if the cottage of Ambrose and Mary had been his birth-place.

At length, when he had been about four months on the island, an adventure took place which changed the features of the life to which he seemed to be destined by his connection with Ambrose. But this incident is reserved for the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

At the close of the preceding chapter we alluded to an adventure which changed the quiet features of the youthful Vivien's island life, and wove in varied colors the web of his destiny. He had been a few months living beneath the lowly roof of his protectors and foster-parents, Ambrose and his good wife, when, one superb moonlight night, as he was seated upon a rock overhanging the water, watching the sparkling waves as they dashed against the shore, he heard the voice of strange and thrilling music coming over the waves. The idea occurred to him that he would cross over to the main land in Ambrose's little boat, and see if he could not behold again the lovely little girl, whose image, from the first day he beheld her when he was at the pier, had lived like a sweet vision in a dream in his thoughts, and whom he believed must be the singer.

"I am old enough now to manage a little boat," he said to himself; "and it is not far, and I will be back in an hour, and shan't be missed by good mamma Mary, who is asleep, and Ambrose is away to the city. He says the rich man that lives there forbids all boats landing there. That is why I should like to land, it is so pleasant to run a little risk, especially to see such a pretty little girl. There is the music again! I will soon see where it comes from."

With this determination Vivien, who was a handsome, spirited boy in his tenth year, and to whom fear was a stranger, descended softly to the cove, unloosed the little skiff from the rock to which it was secured, sprung into it, and shot out into the silvery sound. It was a night of lunar glory, when moonlight seems to fall on the sea like a rain of silver dust. The wind was only a gentle South breath that rippled the surface. All around was quiet beauty. He took the oars and noiselessly, lest he should be heard by his foster-mother and recalled, pulled out into the open strait. It was nearly half a mile across from the isle to the main land. He soon was far out from the island, and the nearer he came to the wooded head-land, darkly looming up before him, the clearer and sweeter came the music he had heard.

But as he rowed on he saw that it did not proceed from the land. but from a boat floating near, containing three persons. He drew cautiously near, and the voice seemed to fill all the air with a glory of sound. He ceased to row, to listen with rapture; for, young as Vivien was, he gave evidence of a rich imagination, a finely attuned ear, graceful tastes, and exquisite love for the beautiful and true. In a word, he possessed all the golden elements that go to make a poet; and the fire of his superbly enlightened eyes, and the sensitive play of his faultless features were in harmony with the sensibilities of his soul. The voice was that of a female. She sang in French, and he recognized the words as those of a song his mother used to sing to him in his happy childhood. Tears came into his eyes. He seemed for a few moments to be lost in a reverie of holy memories, and to forget where he was. The current and the light wind drifted his boat towards that in which sat the singer, and he was only rendered conscious of being so near as almost to touch it by a stern voice from a gentleman.

"How, sirrah? Will you come aboard of us? What do you here, prowling about my shores, at night?"

"Sir, I only came to hear the lady sing," answered Vivien, not a little alarmed to be so harshly addressed. He did not say any more, for the fullness of the rich moonlight fell upon the lovely face of Isabel Shenstone, who at the same moment recognized him, and said with delight,—

"It is the handsome little boy who lives on the island with Ambrose!"

"I want nothing to do with Ambrose or his. Row off, sir."

The voice of the singer was of course silenced.

Here Vivien, addressing in French the lady who had sung, and who appeared about thirty years old, and very noble looking and handsome, said,—

"Madame will be so good as to pardon me, and ask the gentleman not to be angry. I heard your song afar off, and came near to listen; and when I heard the words they made tears come into my eyes, and I could not see that my boat was coming so close to yours."

"He speaks French!" exclaimed Isabel, with surprise and pleasure.

"And with elegance," remarked the lady, who was the governess of Isabel.

"It is strange! Are you not Ambrose's fish-boy?" demanded Mr. Shenstone.

"Yes, sir, but——"

Here he checked the revelation he was about to make, recollecting Ambrose's caution that he ought to be watchful and not to betray himself, lest he should be discovered by his foes and retaken. "Yes, sir—but Ambrose knows French too."

"True." He then turned to the lady, who sat in the stern of the boat, and said: "Most of the people about here are descendants of the old Huguenots, and some of them as a matter of pride keep up a smattering of the language. This boy has got it of them."

"So you have heard before the song, my fine boy?" asked the lady in French.

"Yes, madame. But I must go. I see I have intruded. I bid you a good night!" was his reply, in the same language; and plying his oars, he pulled away from the painted barge of the haughty father of the pretty Isabel. Immediately the lady resumed her song, as if to gratify the noble boy, in whom her kind and gentle way of speaking showed she took a deep interest.

Vivien lay on his oars and listened till tears filled his eyes. The barge at length sailed shoreward, skirting the land, steered by Mr. Shenstone, who managed it with skill. The lady sang various songs in English as well as French, but all were more or less plaintive. Vivien followed at a distance, listening with strange delight. The boat containing the party now disappeared around a black rock, to enter the cove a quarter of a mile beyond. As Vivien lost sight of it, and the voice of the singer became less and less distinct, he saw the mast of a sloop, with a broad, snow-white sail, gleaming in the moonlight like a vast sheet of snow, appear above the cliff. coming also round the point behind which the bark had just disappeared. While he was deliberating whether he should follow their boat any further, to listen to the syren-like voice that seemed to hold his heart in a spell, or return to the island, carrying with him the sweet recollection of Isabel Shenstone's lovely face, a wild shriek startled his ear. Then another still more piercing followed it, while above the cry of mortal terror was heard the quick, loud voices of affrighted men. The sounds came in the direction of the cove headland, behind which he had seen the boat disappear but a few moments before. He saw that the sloop's sail was shivering, and that she had come into the wind.

His heart was in his mouth. He believed that some accident had happened to the boat, and bending to his light oars, he exerted supernatural efforts to reach the scene of the cries that still were prolonged on the air.

In a few seconds he had rowed round the point, and beheld by the bright light of the moon the pleasure barge floating upside down, and one person clinging to it. He discovered a head above the surface, and saw Mr. Shenstone clinging to the anchor fluke of the sloop, half way out of water, and calling in accents of despair,—

"Save my child! Her weight in gold to him who saves my child!"

Vivien heard no more than that Isabel was in danger. He recognized by her shrieks that it was the lady who was clinging to the boat's upturned keel, and knew that the object he saw floating was the fair child. His little boat dashed, like a swift fish cutting the water, towards her, as she was buoyed upon the current, but rapidly sinking. In a moment he was by her, and caught her hand as it was disappearing after her head and body beneath the surface. He seemed to be gifted with strength beyond his years. He lifted her in his arms and placed her in the boat. He then rowed to the overturned yacht, and gave such assistance to the lady as he could, which was only to tell her to take firm hold on his boat, into which he had not strength to lift her, and he would take her safely to the shore. She had presence of mind to do as he directed, and he rowed the boat to the beach a hundred yards distant, and safely landed both her and his prize Isabel upon the foot of the rocky pathway that led to the house.

In the meanwhile Mr. Shenstone had been drawn on board from over the anchor by the crew of the sloop, which had accidentally run the yacht down, neither seeing the other until too late to escape the contact.

The sloop had no boat, and but for the timely aid of Vivien, without question, Isabel, if not her governess, would have perished in sight of Mr. Shenstone, who, unable to swim, could not aid them, and only saved his own life at the moment of collision by clinging to the anchor, which projected low over the bows.

Vivien, finding that Isabel was not insensible, and could speak to thank him, and that the lady was able to look after, placed her on shore, and rowed out to bring off Mr. Shenstone, who was calling with the most intense anguish of voice, to know if his child lived, and to be taken to her.

"Please, sir, get in. I will row you on shore," said Vivien, coming alongside of the sloop.

"You are a brave little fellow," said the captain of the sloop, a sentiment which his men warmly responded to. "It was an accident, sir, and if your craft had been biggest, you would have sunk us. But it was a Providence this brave boy was so near in a boat, for if one of you had been lost I should had it weigh on my heart to the day of my death. What is your name, my hero?"

This question was addressed to Vivien.

"Vivien Falconer. But, please, sir, get in. The little girl and lady ought to go to the house, they are so wet."

Mr. Shenstone descended into the boat; and the captain tossed a glittering object into it at Vivien's feet. "Keep that for my thankfulness to you, my boy!"

Mr. Shenstone sat in the stern. The full light showed the fine resolute face of the boy as he rowed him shoreward.

"You are a noble child! a mere child. I owe you my daughter's life. I was wrong to treat you so rudely. It was rudely. I will not forget you."

Mr. Shenstone felt grateful. He saw his child standing alive and unharmed on the shore. He felt that he owed her life to the fisher-lad. He resolved in some way to reward him. When the boat touched the shore, and he stepped out, he grasped Vivien's hand, and said a second time,—

"I will not forget you."

How shall we describe the feeling re-union of the father and daughter? He folded her again and again to his heart, and wept over her copious floods of tears. He also was so far unbent from his usual coldness of manner, as to grasp, in congratulation at her escape, the hands of the governess.

"But we must not linger here. Our lives are indeed saved, but we cannot expose them longer. So much, my sweet daughter," he added, with a slight tone of reproof, "for yielding to your wishes to take a moonlight sail. Let us hasten to the house, where you can, with dry garments and sleep, refresh yourself after such dreadful dangers."

"And you, dear papa! You are as wet as we are. And the——"

She was going to say the clothes of the handsome Vivien were quite as much saturated with water as theirs, in drawing her out of the sea; but to her surprise he was no longer to be seen. He had no sooner let Mr. Shenstone land, than he backed his oars with the intention of a generous nature which shrinks from gratitude, to get away before they could thank him.

The sloop, which had done this mischief, now resumed her course, and Vivien was about to return to the island, when the upturned yacht caught his eye. He rowed towards it, and fastening a painter to it, began laboriously to tow it on towards the shore. It was a heavy task and long, but his was not a spirit to yield to difficulties. After half an hour's exertion he brought it to land, and firmly secured it to a bolt in the rock. By this time he was quite overcome with fatigue, and slowly turned to row homeward. He got about half way across, when, overcome with weariness and sleep, the noble little fellow fell fast asleep while rowing, and sank forward gently into the bottom of the boat.

The waves gently rocked the slumberer as he slept in the bosom of the sea. The deep silence of the night, unbroken by a single sound, favored his profound repose. His little boat, like the Ark in which the infant Moses slept, was guided by the hand of Providence. About midnight, Mary having awakened and missed her protege, and finding the boat gone, was filled with a thousand fears. She was wringing her hands, and imagining every danger to have come upon him, when her eyes fell upon the little boat drifting towards the island. She hastened down to the shore, and seeing it apparently empty, she was sure that Vivien was drowned. But as it drifted by, so that she could look into it, she saw him laying in it fast asleep. At first she believed him dead; but her voice, as she sprang on board as it touched the strand, aroused him.

"Oh, mother, I have saved the life of that little girl!" were his first words.

Here, in answer to her inquiries and reproofs, he informed her of the events of the night. Mary hugged him to her heart and blessed God for his safe return.

"You are too rash—too venturesome altogether, Vivien! You did wrong and ——"

"But I saved them! If I hadn't done wrong and been there, the good lady who sang so sweetly, and the pretty Isabel I love so much, would have been drowned! Ambrose will not think I did wrong, nor do you, mamma."

Her only reply was an embrace and words of praise and affection.

The evening of the following day a boat rowed by two men, and containing Mr. Shenstone, landed in the cove of the little island in front of the dwelling of the fisherman, Ambrose. Mary, upon seeing him approach the house, was alarmed, and in full bustle to give the great man a proper reception for "poor folk," as she afterwards said in relating the circumstance to Ambrose after his return.

Vivien, upon his approach, was engaged at the door mending a seine, dressed as usual in the coarse garb of his craft. The cold, dark man bowed slightly as he came up, in recognition of Mary's low courtesy.

"This is the wife of Ambrose?"

"Yes, if it please your worship!" answered the wife.

"He is away?"

"He will be at home to-night."

"Tell him when he comes I wish to see him. Ask him not to delay coming over to my house."

"I will tell him, sir."

Here the eye of Mr. Shenstone fell on Vivien.

"Come to me, my lad! I wish to thank you for your good services, for myself and daughter, last night. I owe her life to your courage."

"I did only what I ought to do, sir," answered the lad with respect, but without stopping his work. "I hope the pretty little girl and singing lady are well to-day."

"Quite so! Here is a gift from each of them as well as one from me."

Here Mr. Shenstone attempted to give him a brooch of gold, a ring, and a little roll of gold pieces.

"I thank you, Monsieur, but I cannot have money and presents for saving such a dear little girl's life." And his fine face glowed with pride.

"Then ma'am you will take them for your son, who surprises me by his refusal."

"Please, sir, not because I do not thank the ladies, but I cannot take anything, if you please."

He placed them in Mary's hand, and then said:

"I wish to show my regard for your noble child's deed by educating him. Will you allow me that privilege?"

Mary did not, he saw, exactly comprehend him, and betrayed this by her puzzled look.

"I desire to send him to school and college, and to do for him all you would do for him were you able."

"Send him off from us! Oh, never! He is our all!"

"But it will be for his good. I see he is a boy above his years in intelligence. You would not object to seeing him made a great man."

"No; but he must not be taken from us."

"Well, send your husband, Ambrose, to me. We will talk it over. I here say to you that I will pay the cost of your fine boy's education to manhood; and you will do me a favor to allow me in this shape to quit myself of a deep obligation to him."

"Oh, mamma, do let me go! I love books so!" exclaimed Vivien with animation. "I can then be rich and build you a palace, and make you and Ambrose *so* happy and grand! I can never be richer than good Diggon here, by fishing; but I can be a student, and write books by-and-by and be *so* rich; and you and Ambrose shall have it all."

"He wishes it, you see," said Mr. Shenstone, who was really prompted by the noblest impulses in making this offer to educate Vivien. His defects of character were, jealousy of his sweet child's affection, even when lavished on her caged bird; and a coldness of manner that amounted to icy indifference to all things that did not concern intimately his idolized child. "Will you give Ambrose my message?"

"Yes, sir," she answered with filling eyes.

"And try and get your own consent to separate from him, good dame," said Mr. Shenstone, in as courteous and kind a tone as he knew how to assume. "You need not shed tears! It will be for your child's advantage."

Thus saying the proprietor of "Oak-head," which was the name of his estate, slightly, but coldly bowed, and returning to the boat was rowed away from the island.

"I have at least acquitted myself of a duty, as well as complied with my rescued child's entreaties," he said half-aloud, as he re-crossed the blue water; "and if they do not accept my offer I cannot judge myself. But I would rather he would go away! I see that Isabel will think of him constantly, and perhaps through her gratitude and admiration (already developing itself in her little heart,) she may deprive me of her whole love. It may be weak—it may be a superstition—it may be absurd, but I can bear no rival in her regards!—none! And were their boy, with his extraordinary beauty, courage, and the prestige of having saved her life, to remain so near, she would make him the centre of her thoughts."

As he entered his own home again, Isabel was seated upon a low ottoman by the side of her foreign governess, who, pale and yet suffering from the alarm and efforts of the previous day, reclined upon a sofa. Isabel was bathing her brow, and bending over her with affectionate solicitude; for the lady had succeeded in winning the confidence and love of her most intelligent pupil.

"I hope you are much better now, Madamoiselle Eugenie," said Isabel, gently.

"I feel your kindness, my dear Belle. It was a great shock. I suffered not only for my own peril, but twice suffered in witnessing yours! When that brave boy came flying round you in his little boat, and drew you out of the water in his arms, I thought he was an angel, sent from Heaven! His voice has made a strange impression on me! It floats yet through my brain like some hitherto long-forgotten music. I could not see his face distinctly, as it was only moonlight, and it was in shadow; but I know it must have a fine generous expression."

"Ma'mselle, will it be wrong for me to love him?"—suddenly and naively asked the lovely child.

The lady smiled, and kissing her on the cheek said playfully—

"No, Belle! *I* shall always feel grateful to him. I hope you will."

But papa says I must love nobody else in the world but him—not even you, Ma'mselle!"

"He will let you love *me* at least, dear girl," she answered with a look of gentle surprise into the large blue and glorious eyes of the child.

"No, no! He says I must not love even you!"

The lady smiled and drew her to her and embraced her, saying, "*We* must love one another, Isabel, and I will promise that you shall love your pa quite as well? I am glad he has consented to repay our young deliverer by offering him an education. Perhaps, Isabel, he may grow up to be a young gentleman of talent and be yet worthy of your father's regard and your own friendship."

At this moment Mr. Shenstone entered. He had stood for a moment beholding his child locked in the embrace of the invalid governess and his brow darkened.

"Madame," he cried in a stern voice that caused Isabel to spring with fear, and the lady to rise, "I employed you not to betray me in my own house, but to teach my child French. You are teaching her to love you and you rob me! This conduct is highly displeasing to me. I see that it is too late to remedy the evil, and the only security for the future is your absence. To-morrow my carriage will await your commands to convey you to the city. Isabel, you will come with me."

Mr. Shenstone took his daughter by the hand, and left the amazed governess scarcely able to comprehend what had passed.

"Is it possible that my suspicions are confirmed!" she ejaculated after a moment's reflection; can it be that this dark, cold man is jealous of that seraphic child's affections? Does he hate all who love her, and mark as foes all she loves? It must be so! He is a madman! He is monomaniac! And, poor child! she is beginning to fear him! She cannot understand him! Her tremulous lip, and brimful eyes as he led her out of the room, had he seen them as I did, would warn him that he may turn her filial love to filial dread, and that instead of being reverenced as a father he may be hated as a tyrant. I have suspected this! but it is now a verification. It must be then, that I go. Sweet child! who will take my place? Some one thou darest not love or smile upon for fear of thy father's frown!

The next day the educated, lady-like, Ma'mselle Eugenie, after a three months' residence at Oak-head, took her departure; whilst Isabel, hardly able to yield her up, was borne from her into the house in tears.

The same day Mr. Shenstone had a visit from Ambrose. The fisherman was guarded and did not acknowledge that Vivien was only an adopted son. He feared to trust the secret to a man whom he could not oblige to keep it. He foresaw the benefits that would be realized by Vivien; he had already often talked with Mary how he wished that a boy, evidently born to a higher rank, could have a higher career before him than to be a fisherman. It seemed therefore Providential, as he termed it, when Mr. Shenstone proposed to send him to an institution of learning at his own cost. He gave his full consent, with the condition that he might be permitted to see him once a-year.

"Not *here*, Mr. Ambrose. He must not come home," said Mr. Shenstone, firmly.

"Then we, Mary and I, can *go* and see him?"

"Yes, without doubt."

Ambrose having already gained his wife's reluctant consent, at once concluded the business with Mr. Shenstone. The following Thursday as soon as the sun rose, Vivien took his tearful farewell of his dear adopted mother, and accompanied Ambrose on board the "Sea Bird," which was the name of the vessel belonging to him. The wardrobe, and money and books necessary for our hero in his new situation had all been provided and sent to him by Mr. Shenstone; and it was by Ambrose's desire that Vivien was to go to his school in a small town on the Connecticut river in the "Sea Bird," rather than by the mail road.

As the little vessel sailed out of the island cove the sorrowful-hearted Mary could not see it half the time for the tears that blinded her; and when she did see it she sent after Vivien kisses and waves of her handkerchief. The "Sea Bird" was also watched from Oak-head! Mr. Shenstone stood in the oak grove with Isabel, and seemed to take an interest in the departure. Ambrose steered near so as to be within hail; and Vivien, in the excess of his joy and high hopes, and gratitude to Mr. Shenstone, called out "Good-bye!—adieu, Isabel! Farewell, sir! I hope to be so good a scholar you shall not be ashamed of me!"

"Good-bye, Vivien! You must not forget me," cried Isabel.

Mr. Shenstone frowned—but did not speak.

"I will remember you as long as I live," was the gallant answer, and the Sea Bird passed out of hearing, wafted swiftly towards the mouth of the river to which it was bound. Isabel followed it with her eyes till it melted into the horizon.

CHAPTER V.

We now enter upon a more advanced stage of the life of our hero. We pass over twelve years of his student life, and present him no longer a lad of ten, but a young man of two and twenty, finely formed, intellectual, educated as a gentleman, and with a face rich in manly beauty, and expressive with all the fire and feeling of a generous and noble nature. His hair was dark, his eyes hazel, but black when he was excited, and the tones of his voice were singularly mellow and pleasing. He spoke to men as if he confided in them, and his frankness met with manly confidence from all noble minds kindred with his own.

During the twelve years of his absence from the humble home of Ambrose and Mary, he had been annually visited by them in the old vessel; for the "Sea Bird" seemed to be as staunch as ever with her years; and old Diggon showed no other signs of age, than bending his back a little rounder, and growing bald. He and the "Sea Bird" were still inseparable, and promised to succumb to time together.

Mr. Shenstone had shown marked signs of growing age, in the twelve years' interval. His hair had become white as wool, and waved long upon his shoulders. His brows were gray, and singularly contrasted with his dark glowing eyes. But he was as upright, as cold, as thoughtfully sad as ever. Faithful to his pledge to Ambrose, he had borne all the yearly expenses of the education of Vivien, but refrained to speak of him or to see him, in all the long interval. His fear of him as a rival for his child's affection, was clearly underlying all his generous desire, to repay him for his child's rescue. It was as much to remove him from her sight and thoughts, as to educate him, that he performed this act of persevering continuance. But Mr. Shenstone was rich. Money was no object to him, where his feelings were concerned. He would rather for Isabel's sake be poor. This sentiment deepened in his mind as she bloomed into womanhood! He dreaded as she grew up, lest as an heiress, she would be sought out, and taken from beneath his roof by marriage. As a child, he sacrificed every thing, and all persons around her, to keep her from loving any one but himself. As he saw her blooming into womanhood, he was tortured with the idea of her being lost to his monopolizing affection, by that tenderer sentiment of the heart, which is the gift of nature, as well as the love of a child for its father.

Isabel Shenstone had in the interval of the twelve years, during which young Vivien Falconer was receiving his education, grown to be a superb creature, with charming face, and manners singularly captivating. Upon her mind, her father had lavished all the aids that wealth could command.

He had taken her, after four years' tuition at home, to Europe, and there placed her under the care of the first private teachers, for he placed her in no school, and was always present when her lessons were given; and in person he superintended her tasks. He was a highly accomplished man, and under his guidance her mind expanded like fertile soil.

But with all his care, love, and pride in her, with a devotion to her that was almost slavish, with all his arts and devices to please her, and atone to her for depriving her of all society, she *feared* more than loved him! She was ill at ease in his presence. She felt she was a prisoner to a strange and painful jealousy! As she grew older, and was able to think and reflect upon her situation, and his character, she was able to see that she was being sacrificed to a morbid love for her, that could only be responded to by her, with pain and sorrow. She felt that his parental affection for her, was a disease of the mind. She pitied him, when she saw him almost kneel to her to induce her to lavish upon him caresses. If she did not kiss him every time she entered the room, if it was a score of times in a forenoon, if the kisses were not accompanied by her arms entwined about his neck, he would accuse her of not loving him. This state of things became a tyranny. As she advanced towards womanhood, it caused her to shun his presence, and to almost to hate him. It required all her sense of duty, all her amiability, all her courage and nobleness of nature to endure this persecution of a jealous father.

Mr. Shenstone saw that she was driven from him rater than drawn to him, by this excess of passion for his child; and he would then seek her forgiveness with emotion, and implore her to tell him she loved him, and no one else. When he doubted at all, he heaped jewels and costly gifts upon her to repurchase her favor and affection.

At length Isabel returned with her wretched father from Europe, only to find herself his prisoner at Oak-head. She was now eighteen, an heiress with beauty of the highest style. She had little knowledge of the world, her secluded life with her father, having been almost that of a convent education. Nay, she knew no one else but her several masters. What wonder then, that she should cherish in her heart's most deep and sacred treasure-house, the memory with the handsome face of the noble boy Vivien. He reigned alone there. She carried his memory to Europe in her heart's casket, and brought it back again dearer to her than ever.

In the twelve years she had not heard from him, save through Ambrose, who after his annual visits to him while at Middletown, and afterwards at New Haven, used to send Mary over, and tell her how he was. But during her three years in Europe, she had heard only once, and by an American journal which her father laid upon the table, while they were in Paris. This news-paper gave her the pleasant intelligence, under the head of "Graduates at the Commencement of Yale," that "Vivien Falconer had taken the second honor."

Hearing her father coming in, she endeavored to conceal the look of joy she felt was in her eyes and on her glowing cheeks. The father had thus taught her, compelled her to withold from him the dearest secret of her life! Exacting love may be love's destruction. Yet Isabel loved her father—but it was a love mingled with pity, and with fear! He seemed at times an incomprehensible enigma to her amazed mind. She lived, moved, breathed, only with fear of offending him.

The noble villa of Oak-head had been prepared with sumptuous expense, for the reception of its heiress. Before quitting France to return, Mr. Shenstone had sent orders to his agent to spare no expense in rendering it an abode fit for a Princess. To aid in this result, (for he wished so gorgeously to gild the cage, that the bird would never wish to leave it for the pure air,) he purchased in Paris, the most beautiful adornments for hall, parlor, boudoir and library, that art could furnish in exchange for gold.

A few days before embarking, he had sent home some paintings, from pencils of the first masters of the Academy of Paris.

Upon beholding one of them, the portrait of a very handsome lady, in costume almost royal, Isabel exclaimed,—

"Oh, my dear father! how like——

Here she checked her speech, and added abruptly—"nobody!"

Poor girl! her whole conversation with her father, was a series of half-sentences—checkings of herself—lest she should displease him. She so feared to offend him, there were so many unthought of ways by which he could be made offended or hurt, his jealousy had so many threads extended to all points of the air, like the meshes of the web of the spider, which would intercept even the down that floats by on the breeze.

"Like whom?" he demanded with an instant glance of suspicion. "Tell me, like whom?"

"Like Vivien, sir!" she answered almost vexed at his insisting upon her reply.

"What? Do you still bear in mind that boy? Yes, it does resemble him, and therefore it shall go back to the place it came from! My child, I trusted you had thoughts only for your loving and idolizing father," he sadly added, after taking one or two rapid turns across the room. "But this picture——"

"The picture is nothing, dear father! I will think no more of it."

"That is a good daughter. Love and think only of your father, who for your sake, would sacrifice even life, and his hopes of Heaven."

"Then you believe in a Heaven, sir?"

"No—yes! But this is nothing to the matter."

"You say yes, dear father! If you believe in a Heaven, you must recognize a God to love."

"It cannot be—is not known. You cannot understand these mysteries, child!"

Isabel sighed. She had often tried to draw her father to converse upon this subject, but in vain. He feared that if she knew God, she would love him more than himself. But the fair girl, unknown to him, was a Christian. One of her teachers, an English lady, to her surprise, found her a lovely heathen, ignorant of every truth of revealed faith. She taught her the great principles of religion, and the pure doctrines of the Gospel. She was a ready disciple; and embraced the faith of the Cross, and gave her young heart and affection to her Creator; which act of love instead of lessening her devotion to her father only made her feel more how sacredly bound she was to love him, and to bear more patiently all his parental tyranny! If Mr. Shenstone had comprehended the true spirit of Christianity, he would rather have revealed God to her, than concealed Him from her. The picture of the beautiful and stately French lady was sent back to the seller, and Isabel trembled lest Vivien's name should again spring to her lips.

The lovely heroine of our story had not been three hours at home again, after years of absence, before she found her footsteps straying along the shady copse that skirted the walk leading to the "Three Oaks." This place, the reader will remember, was a group of majestic trees standing near together, upon the extremity of the headland on which the estate was situated. Beneath them were fixed rural seats, and those who were seated there had a prospect of the sound and the barks moving to and fro; while in the middle ground of the scene was the rocky green inlet called the "Pirate's Bride," where Ambrose dwelt. Whence it had this name, the reader may by and by learn.

Towards this sequestered spot Isabel directed her steps. She had seen the whole villa, following her idolizing father into every apartment. She had admired, truly and gratefully, for all he had done for her happiness and luxury, the costly mirrors, the superb toilet tables, the gorgeous carpets, the splendid ceilings gilded with stars on a celestial blue ground, the magnificent curtains, the exquisite inlaid furniture, in one room green and gold, in another scarlet and silver, in a third orange and oak, in a fourth bronzed. All these costly ornaments, not to speak of countless articles of bijouterie, pictures, candelabra, and "what not," Isabel surveyed with admiration, not only because they were really worthy to be admired, but because her father's eye watched the expression of her face, and the effect of each new display upon her; and therefore she admired to please him. But he had so lavished upon her all her life splendor and gifts, to purchase (as it were) her sole and undivided affection, that no new thing moved her, as it would have done other daughters. Novelty with its delicate senses had been destroyed by overburdening. He feared it—mistrusted it, this unhappy man, therefore did he so closely watch her countenance, to see if he could behold the pleasure he sought, by all this princely outlay, to convey to her.

It was the poor father's waking idea, and it mingled with the dreams of his pillow, how he should so bind this noble and beautiful young woman of eighteen to him for life! If when she was younger he was jealous lest she should not love him, now he was tortured with the fear that she would be torn from him by that holy instinct of woman's nature which prompts her to "leave a father and a father's home, and cleave unto a husband." To prevent this, he had guarded her like a jailer; watched over her as if he were verily a jealous husband himself; concealed her from society, and hedged her in, both in France and in England, from all male acquaintance.

Duty, pity, love, fear, habit, led Isabel to submit quietly to all this. She was now old enough to reflect and to understand the peculiar idiosyncrasy of her father's character. It pleased her for the present to humor it. The Christian principles she had imbibed taught her obedience and "to honor her father." And verily none but the prime-minister of Jealousy himself could have found fault with her. She was the personification of filial reverence and devotion. But with all her outward bearing, she did not, could not, love him as a generous daughter would desire to love a father. She trembled more with fear than with joy in the presence of his austere and sleepless eye. She lived under a spell that paralyzed her. In seeking the oaks she was prompted by feelings that belonged to the past—that arched the clouds of her childhood with a bow of pleasant tints. She stole away from the villa, leaving her father fatigued and resting upon an ottoman, and asleep. In a few minutes she was at the "Three Oaks." She stood beneath them, and gazed off across the half-a-mile space of water that separated the Pirate's Bride from the head-land on which she was. The day was drawing to a close. The sun-set sky was an alembic of liquid gold, in which many brilliant colors were fused into one rich sea of splendor. Clouds of purple and bronze were anchored in this bright sea of heaven, like islands on which angels might have their homes. The eyes of Isabel saw only the little rocky island opposite, which contained the lowly home of Ambrose and Mary! But it was not for Ambrose and Mary's sake she came down to the shore to look at the island! She was thinking of almost the only person whom she ever knew, or thought of, besides her father, and the one whom her father had for twelve years feared! Strange that the same heart—Isabel's heart—should hold love for two who were not loved by each other! Strange that the heart that gave all filial duty to a father, should, also, yield the leaves of love to be ready for the gathering by a hand of the object of that father's fear!

Isabel gazed upon the island, looking dark and romantic in the eastward lying shadows of the approaching evening. She saw the roof of the fisherman's hut, and the blue smoke curling upward from the hearth, where, perhaps, thought she, Mary is cooking the evening meal. She discerned the "Sea Bird" at anchor in the cove, but could see no one moving about on the island.

"I wonder if Vivien is there," she said, half aloud. "He must have left the University; but if he is now so finely educated, and with all the high associations of a gentleman, and the tastes of a student, he cannot be content there! Yet he is too noble and good to turn his back on his poor father and mother. But why do I think of him? Why has he been as the central sun to that inner universe of my soul within, for twelve years? Why does every enjoyment lack its completeness because Vivien enjoys it not also with me? Why is it that every book I read I think this or that would so please Vivien? or such a passage would be read with delight by him? When I read poetry now, it seems but half read and understood without his mind sympathizing with mine. How is it that I have but half a soul and make him the other half? Yet—I can never realize my dreams and hopes! My father—my poor father is gilding my cage, and will clip my wings if he feared I would fly. I must not think this happy thought, that Vivien and I may one day love forever!"

She sighed, and walked on slowly, in deep thought. She came to the place where Vivien had rescued her twelve years ago. Here her face grew pale, and then richly roseate.

"There, but for him I should have drowned! This spot is dear to me, for on these silver sands he gave me back to life again. For this my life is owed to him—for this——But why do I cherish such wild thoughts? Perhaps he has forgotten me. Perhaps if my name were named he would have to recollect himself. Because he saved my life is no reason he should remember me. Noble minds forget soon favors done by them to others. Oh! if he could see into my poor, remembering heart! Never shall *I* forget, though I may be forgotten by him."

She sat down upon a rock, and with her cheek in her hand gazed upon the water. Her beautiful and intellectual face was pensive. Tears, by-and-by, were forced into her eyes by the pressure of thoughts within. She yielded to the emotion in her full heart, and burying her face in her jewelled hands, she wept alone and with the abandonment of a child.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.]

THE ATHEIST.—A COMPARISON.

Of thoughts enlarged and more exalted mind.

As we were one day taking a stroll in the Crystal Palace, we indulged our thoughts in the pursuit of a certain analogy between that fabric and the Christian Church in the largest sense. The divine order and economy of the one seemed to be emblematically set forth by the just, plain, and majestic architecture of the other. And as the one consists of a great variety of parts united in the same regular design, according to the truest art, and the most exact proportion; so the other contains a decent subordination of members, various sacred institutions, sublime doctrines and solid precepts of morality digested into the same design, and with an admirable concurrence tending to one view, the happiness and exaltation of human nature.

In the midst of our contemplation, we beheld a fly upon one of the pillars; and it straightway came into our head, that this same fly was an atheist. For it required some comprehension in the eye of the spectator, to take in at one view the various parts of the building, in order to observe their symmetry and design. But to observe the fly, whose prospect was confined to a little part of one of the sections of a single pillar, the joint beauty of the whole, or the distinct use of its parts, were inconspicuous, and nothing could appear but small inequalities in the surface of the column, which in the view of the insect seemed so many deformed rocks and precipices.

The thoughts of an atheist are employed on certain minute particularities of religion, the difficulty of a single text, or the unaccountableness of some step of Providence or point of doctrine to his narrow faculties, without comprehending the scope and design of Christianity, the perfection to which it raises human nature, the light it has shed abroad in the world, and the close connexion it has as well with the good of public societies, as with that of particular persons.

THE DAGUERREOTYPISTS.

BY EMMA ALICE BROWNE.

Oh, poets of a wondrous art!
Ye have most nobly set this age
To music on the sunlit page
That holds the image of the heart.

So now our sweet ones cannot die—
They flash upon us where we stand,
God-painted by the poet's hand
With the clear splendor of the sky!

And though the foreign summers break
About their wandering steps, we hold
The darling face, the shadowy gold,
The ideal-real, for love's sake:

And though the dreary winters blow
Across their silent resting place,
We kiss the image of the face
That moulders in the dust below.

Yours is the awful art to win
The fading unto fadeless bloom—
To wrest the beauty from the tomb
That darkly clasps our treasures in.

We keep the ideal, and the grave
May take the real for a space,
Since on us shines the pictured grace
Of all that glorious beauty gave.

And, poet-artists, take my lay,
I give it with a grateful heart—
The stamp of God-hood on your art
Redeems ye from our common clay!

◆

A DAY'S PLEASURING.

A SKETCH OF LONG AGO.

"Man proposes but God disposes."

"Two jintlemin in the parlor for Miss Kate," said Irish Maggie, thrusting her head into my aunt's room, where we were sitting at our sewing, one pleasant summer morning.

"Gentlemen, Maggie? Who are they? Did they give their names?"

"Faith, and that they didn't, Miss Kate. But they're just some of thim young sparks that do be comin' here so often that they thinks I know thim well by now. Shall I tell 'em ye're comin' down, Miss Kate?"

"No, Maggie, I am coming to tell them myself," I replied, smoothing down my hair before the glass, and pulling my collar straight.

"Never mind, Kate, you'll do very well for the gentlemen. It can't be *somebody*, for he was here last night,—there, don't blush so, I've no more to say."

"What a dear, provoking auntie!" I answered, kissing her; and then, concluding that I *did* look well enough for the two gentlemen, I went down stairs.

To tell the truth, I did half expect to see *somebody* when I opened the parlor door. The green, Venetian blinds were closed to exclude the light, but the room was not so dark that I failed to recognize the two gentlemen who rose as I entered.

"Good morning, good morning, Miss Kate," they chorussed, in laughing tones. "You deserve credit for not making us wait, as Miss Lane did, whom we called upon just now."

"She came down dressed as if for a party," said Mr. Roberts. "But Miss Kate knows better. She knows that beauty when unadorned is most adorned."

"Thank you, Mr. Roberts, for giving me so much credit for knowledge; but I am at a loss to understand how I have gained it."

"Ah, you know very well what I mean; but I must not say any more, for Mr. Stowe is impatient to do his errand, I see, and then we must be off."

"Be seated, then, gentlemen, and I will listen. On so warm a morning everything should be done cooly and deliberately. There—I am ready to hear, and you to speak, I think."

"Well, the fact is, that we are ambassadors, Miss Kate, with proper credentials, empowered by—in fact, 'not to put too fine a point upon it,' we are sent in the name of the Bachelor's Club of S., to invite you to an excursion for the 20th, provided it should be a pleasant day—if not, the first fine day afterward. We have chartered the Paul Pry, and are going to spend the day upon Ash Island. We shall have music, and something by way of eatables, and are going to invite all the young ladies in town. Will you go?"

"Certainly, I shall be very happy to do so, if my friends are going. Have all the young ladies accepted the invitation?"

"All conditionally, if not fully. Some of the ladies we have called upon feared they had engagements for that day, and others wished to consult their mammas. All seemed pleased with the proposition, however, and I think will attend, if possible."

"Consider me engaged for the excursion, then," I said, as the gentlemen rose to go. "I thank you much for affording me so delightful a project in anticipation."

The gentlemen bowed themselves out, and I ran up to impart to my aunt a knowledge of this delightful invitation. There was one thought connected with it which I did not impart, but sat dreaming over it as I sewed mechanically upon a long seam: *Somebody* belonged to the Bachelor's Club *now*, and *somebody* was sure to be my particular escort on the 20th; and there were delightful groves in which we might ramble, the long, bright day through, upon Ash Island.

Well, well, we have all had our dreams, I suppose! Happy for us if the dear *somebody* of our youth has not long since faded out of them!

The sun rose bright up into the clear sky on the long expected morning of the 20th. At ten o'clock *somebody* called, and you may be sure he was not kept waiting very long. We walked along the pleasant streets, usually so quiet, but now gay with the pretty summer-toilets of the young ladies, and their bright faces, as they wended their way, each with one of the "Bachelors" by her side, toward the pier where the Paul Pry was moored. The little boat, that with its inquisitive, saucy air, seemed to merit the name bestowed upon it, was in its best trim that day. The decks scoured to the last degree of whiteness, flags and streamers waving from its mast-head, and festooned about the walls of the tiny cabin, and a general holiday jauntiness of appearance, as if it was about setting out upon some pleasant mission.

Presently everybody was on board, and all was ready. The escape-pipe ceased sending forth its thunder, the paddles moved slowly round, and, with the band upon the deck playing a lively air, the Paul Pry backed crab-wise out of "the cove," turned in a broad, circling track when she reached the open bay, and then sped upon her course; while faint over the waters, from the receding shore, came the loud hurrahs of the crowd of idle men and boys who had gathered to see us off.

Oh, how beautiful were the blue waters of that lovely bay that summer morning—every tiny riplet sending back sparks of light as the sun-rays played upon it; while the green shores, dotted with white hamlets and scattered farm-houses, with here and there a church-spire pointing upward into the infinite blue, where the fleecy clouds sailed on, like the wings of angels hovering over the beautiful earth, seemed smiling in vernal beauty, and rejoicing in the sweetest harmonies of nature, never felt more deeply than in that peaceful and lovely spot. Youth, and joy, and beauty—ye sang to me your divinest song that summer morning of long ago! Discords and grief notes have mingled with the strain as the years rolled on, but its pristine melody has never melted from my ear!

I wore slight mourning for a dear friend but recently "gone home," and so did not mingle in the dance which merry youths and maidens kept up on the white deck, with undiminished spirit, all the morning, until the wooded points and tiny islands, green as emeralds rising up out of the blue water, passed, the Paul Pry came out upon the open lake, where there were waves rolling high enough to make their footing a little unsteady. Promenading and flirting, much sensible talk and also much chattering, filled up the time until the Paul Pry rounded up towards Ash Island, and cast anchor in a little bay, between two jutting points, and the party were speedily disembarked.

Very joyously and happily passed that long summer afternoon. The gayer ones of the party danced merrily upon the velvety green-sward, so smooth and level that one and all declared it must have been the fairies' rendezvous. The sentimental ones strolled in groups, or pairs, among the trees, or followed the course of the prattling brook that emptied its bright waters into the bay where the Paul Pry was moored. Others embarked, with their fishing tackle, upon a tiny lakelet which, without visible outlet or inlet, or connection with the Lake, was embedded in the green, setting off the ancient trees that rose above the highest point of the island. Meanwhile, busy servants were laying a long table beneath the trees, and flitting to and fro as they prepared to serve the excellent dinner which the host of the "Exchange" had sent on board the Paul Pry just before we started.

Weston Stowe, one of the famous committee whose visit was mentioned at the head of this little sketch, had long been attached to sweet Annie Barton. Weston was a lawyer, and as he had only a few months before hung his sign upon the front of a neat office in Main-street, and already commenced a flourishing professional business, it was confidently supposed the marriage would not be much longer delayed.

Annie Barton was an orphan girl who found a pleasant home in the house of a rich, childless uncle; where she was as a daughter to the old couple who almost worshipped her in return for the love she bestowed upon them. They had made but one condition to their consent to her marriage—that was, that she should still continue to reside with them. When Weston Stowe would have declined this condition, as detracting something from his independence and his just pride in desiring to provide a home, all his own, for his lovely bride, Mr. Barton had silenced his scruples by saying:—

"This house and all I have will be Annie's when I am gone. My life cannot be prolonged many years; and, surely, you will not deprive its declining days of the sunshine of Annie's presence. The 'auld wife' and I would walk in darkness the remnant of our lives if Annie went from us."

Weston yielded, as who would not to such an appeal; and so it was settled that an adopted son would soon be added to the Bartons' household. To-day the pair walked apart, and talked in low tones of their happiness, and discussed their plans for the new life which was about to commence. To them everything around put on an added beauty, seen through the medium of their deep happiness.

Strolling along the woodland paths with *somebody* beside me, I saw Weston and Annie seated upon the mossy roots of a huge beech, and would have turned away, unwilling to interrupt their conversation, which I saw was engrossing. But Annie caught sight of us, and gaily called us to her side. Weston gave me his place, and the two gentlemen, themselves as fast friends as Annie and myself, stood leaning against the tree and looking down upon us while we discussed the plans of the approaching wedding, and the fitting up of those rooms in the Barton mansion which were to be devoted to the married pair. I was to be Annie's bridesmaid; and *somebody* had promised to be bridegroom's man "just to learn how to conduct himself when his turn came."

We sat there, deeply interested in our talk, until the summons to dinner was heard; and the separate parties of strollers and anglers were seen making their way towards the verdant dining-hall. The fairies' ball-room was deserted, and nymphs who had tripped upon the green-sward, almost as lightly as Titania's subjects, were soon seen at table entering into a consumption of the excellent viands with appetites that showed they were but human beings, after all.

Mirth and laughter, jest and song, passed round the "festive board," until full justice had been done to the good things gathered there; and then the party dispersed again—some hieing to the ball-room, as they termed it, with renewed gaiety, and others starting off through the wood for the lakelet in the hopes of catching a few more fish—at any rate of being able to boast of having sailed over the surface of its mysterious waters.

The four who had sat beneath the beech-tree were of this party. When we reached the shore we found the boat so old and crazy that Annie and I both shrank from entering it. I was always fearful and timid about going upon the water in small boats, and could not be persuaded to enter this; but Annie, more courageous, or more trustful in Weston's promises that no harm should come to her, than I in those whispered in my ear, finally consented. Weston aided her into the boat. As he was about to follow, he suddenly turned back to me.

"Miss Kate," said he, "I can't tell why it should be so, but ever since our conversation this afternoon, these words have been singing in my ears. 'Man proposes, but God disposes.' Can it be that anything will come in to mar our plans, and to ruin our happiness?"

He looked at me so appealingly, that, though his words struck a chill to my heart, I could not refrain from answering, with a light laugh:

"Nonsense! Don't be sentimental, Mr. Stowe. 'Away with melancholy,' was our motto for to-day, you know, and now Annie is waiting for you, and wondering at this mysterous conference."

I could see that my light words jarred unpleasantly upon some chord of feeling, and I half repented having uttered them. But before I had time to say more, he turned away and leaped into the boat.

I stood upon the bank watching them as they rowed out into the centre of the lakelet and threw out their lines. There were several fish caught, and we could hear the merry voices and the little screams of the girls at some sudden motion of the boat, or as the little creatures they lifted out of their element, were thrown into their midst. In a few minutes the signal was given to return to the shore, and the steam was heard escaping from the Paul Pry's pipe. The gentlemen lifted their oars, and turned the boat toward the little landing where we stood.

I never knew how it happened, or whether any one deserved blame, but suddenly the crazy boat careened and filled; and, in a moment the whole party were precipitated into the water.

"Run for assistance," sounded in my ear, above the shrieks of the drowning. I turned just as my friend plunged into the water to swim to the rescue. Franticly I sped along the rough path, unheeding the briars that tore my dress and wounded my flesh, or the stones over which I stumbled. My cries brought assistance, and by the time I returned, all the party save one, had been drawn on shore. Annie Barton was not yet found, and Weston Stowe was madly insisting on plunging again into the lake, in search of her. He soon relapsed into insensibility, for he had gone down several times in search of her, before he would allow himself to be drawn upon the shore, and was fearfully exhausted by his exertions. He, with the rest, were conveyed on board the steam-boat, while the little lake was dragged with boat-hooks as thoroughly as possible, in hope of finding the body of Annie Barton.

At last, but not until the twilight had fallen solemnly upon the dark woods and tiny lake, the hook grappled in her white dress, and she was raised to the surface. I saw her as they laid her upon the beach, so cold and white. There was a dark wound upon her temple, which had probably caused insensibility, if not almost instant death. Thus she had sunk at once and never risen.

In what a sad procession we bore the dead girl back to the boat, which she had left that morning with a heart beating beneath its burden of happiness! How solemnly we sailed out upon the dim lake, bearing that still form to the home which the sunlight of her radiant face should no more illuminate! How silently we sat there, with the hearts which had swelled with joy at morning, now as the stars came out and shone down holily upon us, aching beneath the weight of our great sorrow.

The hours seemed very long before we found ourselves entering the cove, and approaching the crowded pier. Then we would fain have added many more to their number, if we might thus have delayed the announcement of the sorrowful finale of our day of pleasuring. But the boat came slowly up to the wharf, and we began to see the faces of anxious fathers and elder brothers, whom wonder at our late return had congregated thither.

"Where's my little Sunshine?" we heard Mr. Barton's cheery voice saying, as he stood in the front ranks, with his servant John by his side, holding a lantern so as to throw its light upon the deck.

"Where's Annie? Here Stowe—Weston, my boy, why don't you bring Annie ashore?"

Poor Weston could only moan and shudder as he sat in the little cabin, holding the dead girl's hand in his.

"What shall we do, Weston?" whispered Roberts. "Don't you hear Mr. Barton?"

"Go to him, Roberts. I cannot face him yet. Ah," he added, "he little knows what a sad burden his carriage will convey to his home to-night. Kate," turning to me, "do you remember what I said to you as I was entering the boat? I would have given anything, almost, if you would have uttered one word then to dissuade me from going."

Cries of horror and surprise sounded from the wharf. The announcement had been made, and the crowd surged back as it was cried out that Mr. Barton had fallen in a fit. Then as he was borne away to his carriage, which was waiting at the pier-head, the crowd swayed again and commenced pouring aboard the boat. Four stout arms lifted the slight form of the drowned girl, and carried her out of the little cabin, through the throng that pressed forward for a last look upon her sweet, pale face, and laid her in the carriage beside her still insensible uncle. The party dispersed to carry the tale of horror to their homes, the crowd retired, and soon the Paul Pry lay in solitude and darkness at her wharf. Thus ended our day of pleasuring.

Light and gladness went out of Annie Barton's home when they bore her forth to burial. The old people did not long survive her, and then the beautiful home, that should have been Weston's and Annie's, passed into the hands of strangers, and her name was heard no more in the halls where it had so long been the synonym of joy and light.

It was long, very long, before Weston Stowe recovered from the fearful shock he had received. A long illness followed, and soon after his recovery he left S. The very place had become hateful to him, since it had witnessed both his great happiness and his mighty sorrow. Years have passed since his name has greeted my ears. I once heard that he was a rising man, but I know that no breath of fame, no height of gratified ambition could ever make him the happy man that he was on that lovely day, long ago, when he last looked upon the living face of his promised bride—sweet Annie Barton.

Light hearts have grown heavy since that day, dark locks have been streaked with snowy monitors of age, or mementoes of suffering—hopes have faded, joys have withered, Death has claimed his victims, Misfortune hers; and, scattered wide o'er the world's broad battle-plain, they who are left still struggle on, waiting ever for the day of rest, or of deliverance.

M. C. V.

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COMFORT FOR THE DISCONTENTED.

It is pleasant to consider, that whilst we are lamenting our particular afflictions to each other, and repining at the inequality of condition, were it possible to throw off our present miserable state, we cannot name the person whose condition in every particular we would embrace and prefer; and an impartial inquiry into the pride, ill-nature, ill-health, guilt, spleen, or particularity of behavior of others, generally ends in a reconciliation to our dear selves.

This way of thinking is warranted by Shakspeare, in a very extraordinary manner, where he makes Richard the Second, when deposed and imprisoned, debating a matter, which would soon have been determined by a common capacity, whether his prison or palace was most eligible, and with very philosophical hesitation leaving the preference undetermined, in the following lines:

——Sometimes am I a king,
Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
And so indeed I am. Then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king,
Then am I king'd again.——

Prior says very prettily:

Against our peace we arm our will:
Amidst our plenty *something* still
For horses, houses, pictures, planting,
To thee, to me, to him is wanting.
That cruel *something* unpossest
Corrodes and leavens all the rest.
That *something* if we could obtain,
Would soon create a future pain.

We will still further cheer the discontented reader with another bit of wisdom from Juvenal, by Dryden:

Look round the habitable world, how few
Know their own good, or, knowing it, pursue!
How void of reason are our hopes and fears!
What in the conduct of our life appears
So well designed, so luckily begun
But, when we have our wish, we wish undone!

UNDER THE SUNRISE.

It is a blessed and holy privilege, but mournful, very, the contemplation and the memory of the early lost. By contemplation, I mean the spiritual intuition of the beautiful and good vouchsafed unto our inner life—an abstract life tenderer and purer than that that goes out and mixes with the whirl and jar of crime and commerce.

I never think of my dear and lost ones as they are, down there, under the bleak clods of the valley, with a strong door close locking out my kisses, and violets and gray mosses shining through my tears instead of smiles, and the long locks of the beloved sleepers. But I keep glorious sun-pictures in the ancient galleries of my deathless love. Clear-drawn as starlight on a waveless sea—imprints of them, the darling ones, as they would have been—as they might have been, rather. Ah! a mournful angel is that "might have been!" keeping, like the restless phantom of a hope forever lost, in the shadow-haunted chambers of forlorn and widowed hearts.

I love my dead more, sitting here in the wan glimmer of this mid-winter morning, than I ever loved them in the broad glory of the summer times they moved in, more Junes ago, than I can count dead roses in my book of Elia!

I miss them in this ghostly sunrise as I never missed them among all the sweet company of flowers in the fair summer halls of beauty. I feel a dreary want here, in my heart, a desolate void, wide as the river of death, and sorrowful and bleak. And I hear a smothered throbbing in my brain, echoes, I take them, of the blessed feet that quitting the valley of shadow, years ago fell softly in the shining fields of a new immortal life.

Ah! how wildly that piping blast went by; drifting the royal purple and gold of the morning mist into the icy bosom of the wailing wintry woods. So the purple and gold of my morning was shaken and swept away—into the chill bosom and shadow of the grave—oh! rather into the perfect summer, and cloudless splendor of the smile of God!

How very simple a thing can make the heart beat musically! Just now a little bird, browner and plainer than my hair and face, crossed the sunrise like a truer sunbeam, and went past my window, down the gray meadows trilling melodiously, sweet promises of new urn-leaves and flowers. And, oh! what a psalm of summer, what a breath of the era of roses and spice, that tiny wanderer of the snows hath left in my childish heart! Stay, sweet prophecies of the sweetnesses to come. Ye will be pleasant company for the dear faces and calm large eyes (that turned from earth, see God clearly), that shine there, and will not darken or close.

How daintily the fair crimson trembles in the East—just touching the white cheek of the morning with a dream of the glory over-ripe, that burns and thrills in the mystic crucible of lights and tints somewhere in some wizzard temple of the gorgeous cloud-land. There, motionless, but throbbing inly with its own rare heat, between the glorified hills, one misty wave of fire has deepened from the pale rose-glow to fullest crimson, and then to arch-royal purple, staining with the fierce reflection of its matchless beauty the clear smiling of the blue beyond. Not all the splendors of effect and hue that ever startled reality beneath the seraph-guided hand of earth's divinest colorist, Turner; nor all the roses lighting the hills of Cashmere, odor-fanned, ever burned and flashed like yon ethereal blossoming of the majesty of God!

We are prone to people—giving to them the loveliest places—the gorgeous airs of the mid-way realm with rare and glorious beings who once had a name on earth, Mays ago, amid the melodious harpings of the angel-hosts in Heaven! May they not visit us—standing off among the mists of the morning, not to assoil the white robes of their beatific?

Yon floating isle of bloom hath its visionary lilies bowed beneath the white feet of the heart's angels only. And dim in the distance, farther than England's Evangel of the morning dares to soar, that reach of purple glory is a-shine with the glittering spires and lofty domes of the city of the clouds. And leaning from golden lattices, and glancing out of arched doorways, gleam on our dilated inner eyes, the faces we have lost. Forever at rest—knowing no sorrow and no loss forever-more!

But, alas! for mortal dreaming under the evanescent splendors of a wintry sunrise! Even as I write, the little brown bird hath flown farther than my name can hope to go. The lilies fade in the visionary isle. The faces vanish out of those regal palaces, and temples of the soul-worship. The sun is fully up, and half lost under a bank of cold gray storm. And even so perish all that is of earth, dim and unreal, leaving an aching memory in the heart, and a shadow on the face of the watcher left, no sun can shine away. In Heaven there are no achings and no shadows, blessed be God!

EMMA ALICE BROWNE.

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THE WAR OF THE SEXES.

A FABLE.

The two sexes contending for superiority, were once at war with each other, which was chiefly carried on by their auxiliaries. The males were drawn up on the one side of a very spacious plain, the females on the other; between them was left a very large interval for their auxiliaries to engage in. At each extremity of this middle space lay encamped several bodies of neutral forces, who waited for the event of the battle before they would declare themselves, that they might then act as they saw occasion.

The main body of the male auxiliaries was commanded by Fortitude; that of the female by Beauty. Fortitude began the onset on Beauty, but found to his cost, that she had such a particular witchcraft in her looks, as withered all his strength. She played upon him so many smiles and glances, that she quite weakened and disarmed him.

In short, he was ready to call for quarter, had not Wisdom come to his aid; this was the commander of the male right wing, and would have turned the fate of the day, had not he been timely opposed by Cunning, who commanded the left wing of the female auxiliaries. Cunning was the chief engineer of the fair army; but upon this occasion was posted, as we have here said, to receive the attacks of Wisdom. It was very entertaining to see the workings of these two antagonists; the conduct of the one, and the strategems of the other. Never was there a more equal match. Those who beheld it, gave the victory sometimes to the one, and sometimes to the other, though most declared the advantage was on the side of the female commander.

In the meantime the conflict was very great in the left wing of the army, where the battle began to turn to the male side. This wing was commanded by an old experienced officer called Patience, and on the female side by a general known by the name of Scorn. The latter, that fought after the manner of the Parthians, had the better of it all the beginning of the day; but being quite tired out with the long pursuits, and repeated attacks of the enemy, who had been repulsed above a hundred times, and rallied as often, began to think of yielding; when on a sudden a body of neutral forces began to move. The leader was of an ugly look, and gigantic stature. He acted like a Drawcansir, sparing neither friend nor foe. His name was Lust. On the female side he was opposed by a select body of forces, commanded by a young officer that had the face of a cherubim, and the name of Modesty. This beautiful young hero was supported by one of a more masculine turn, and fierce behavior, called by men, Honor, and by the gods, Pride. This last made an obstinate defence, and drove back the enemy more than once, but at length resigned at discretion.

The dreadful monster, after having overturned whole squadrons in the female army, fell in among the males, where he made a more terrible havoc than on the other side. He was here opposed by Reason, who drew up all his forces against him, and held the fight in suspense for some time, but at length quitted the field.

After a great ravage on both sides, the two armies agreed to join against this common foe. And in order to it, drew out a small chosen band, whom they placed by consent under the conduct of Virtue, who in a little time drove this foul, ugly monster out of the field.

Upon his retreat, a second neutral leader, whose name was Love, marched in between the two armies. He headed a body of ten thousand winged boys, that threw their darts and arrows promiscuously among both armies. The wounds they gave were not the wounds of an enemy. They were pleasing to those that felt them; and had so strange an effect, that they wrought a spirit of mutual friendship, reconciliation, and good will in both sexes. The two armies now looked with cordial love on each other, and stretched out their arms with tears of joy, as longing to forget old animosities, and embrace one another.

The last general of neutrals that appeared in the field, was Hymen, who marched immediately after Love, and seconding the good inclinations which he had inspired, joined the hands of both armies. Love generally accompanied him, and recommended the sexes, pair by pair, to his good offices.

But as it is usual enough for several persons to dress themselves in the habit of a great leader, Ambition and Avarice had taken on them the garb and habit of Love, by which means they often imposed on Hymen, by putting into his hands several couples whom he would never have joined together, had it not been brought about by the delusion of these two impostors.

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THE ABSURDITY OF PRIDE.

If there be anything which makes human nature ridiculous to beings of superior faculties, it must be pride. They know so well the vanity of those imaginary perfections that swell the heart of man, and of those little supernumerary advantages, whether in birth, fortune, or title, which one man enjoys above another, that it must certainly very much astonish, if it does not very much divert them, when they see a mortal puffed up, and valuing himself above his neighbors on any of these accounts, at the same time that he is obnoxious to all the common calamities of the species.

To set this thought in its true light, we will fancy, if you please, that yonder mole-hill is inhabited by reasonable creatures, and that every ant (his shape and way of life only excepted) is endowed with human passions. How should we smile to hear one give us an account of the pedigrees, distinctions, and titles that reign among them! Observe how the whole swarm divide and make way for the ant that passes through them! You must understand he is an emmet of quality, and has better blood in his veins than any insect in the mole-hill. Do not you see how sensible he is of it, how slow he marches forward, how the whole rabble of ants keep their distance? Here you may observe one placed upon a little eminence, and looking down on a long row of laborers. He is the richest insect on this side the hillock, he has a walk of half a yard in length, and a quarter of an inch in breadth, he keeps a hundred menial servants, and has at least fifteen barley-corns in his granary. He is now chiding and beslaving the emmet that stands before him, and who, for all that we can discover, is as good an emmet as himself.

But here comes an insect of figure! Do not you take notice of a little white straw that he carries in his mouth? That straw, you must understand, he would not part with for the longest tract about the mole-hill: did you but know what he has undergone to purchase it! See how the ants of all qualities and conditions swarm about him! Should this straw drop out of his mouth, you would see all his numerous circle of attendants follow the next that took it up, and leave the discarded insect, or run over his back to come at his successor.

If now you have a mind to see all the ladies of the mole-hill, observe first the ant that listens to the emmet on her left hand, at the same time that she seems to turn her head away from him. He tells this poor insect that she is a goddess, that her eyes are brighter than the sun, that life and death are at her disposal. She believes him, and gives herself a thousand little airs upon it. Mark the vanity of the insect on your left hand. She can scarce crawl with age; but you must know she values herself upon her birth; and if you mind, spurns at every one that comes within her reach. The little nimble coquette that is running along by the side of her, is a wit. She has broken many an emmet's heart. Do but observe what a drove of lovers are running after her.

We will here finish this imaginary scene; but first of all, to draw the parallel closer, will suppose, if you please, that death comes down upon the mole-hill, in the shape of a cock-sparrow, who picks up, without distinction, the ant of quality and his flatterers; the insect of substance and day-laborers; the white-straw officer and his sycophants; with all the goddesses, wits, and beauties of the mole-hill.

May we not imagine that beings of superior natures and perfections, regard all the instances of pride and vanity, among our own species, in the same kind of view, when they take a survey of those who inhabit the earth: or in the language of an ingenious French poet; of those ants that people this heap of dirt, which human vanity has divided into climates and regions.

AN ERROR.—It is no uncommon error among the ambitious to desire to marry above their rank; but those who succeed in their desire will find that distinction of this sort is a very different thing from happiness. To be placed in a position for which their previous habits have not qualified them, and where they will constantly be exposed to neglect and mortification, will be a constant thorn in the side of the proud, for which nominal rank is poor compensation.

TIGHT LACING.—A learned doctor, referring to tight lacing, avers that it is a public benefit, inasmuch as it kills all the foolish girls, and leaves the wise ones to grow up to be women.

THE MAD LOVER.

BY ALICE CARY.

When Summer rolled her broad and lazy back
  On the green grass, and troops of laughing hours
Followed a-tip-toe on her shining track,
  To trim the hills and river-banks with flowers,

Often the larks would stop their flight to meet
  The tender morn—the ever-murmuring grove
Shut up its whispers, hearing him repeat
  The serious ceremonial of his love.

Then he had mortal mates—unfriendly care,
  And pain, and passions hope-consuming woe,
Till Pity, with the needle of despair,
  Picked out the eyes of Fear, and saved him so.

And thus he passed to those fantastic lands
  Where reason no bright phantom disallows,
And the enchanted air is white with hands
  That paint the beauty of his lady's brows.

Ah, what are the delights of common homes?
  O poets, what to his, your dreams of bliss,
When out of her green house th' young Rose comes,
  And gives him her red finger-tips to kiss!

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FOREST SKETCHES---NO. 20.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY COL. WALTER P. DUNLAP.

HUNTING A NEW GAME.

Uncle Abner's house had two verandas running wholly around it—one near the ground, and one at the second story. One bright, beautiful morning, after an excellent breakfast, we sat upon the upper veranda smoking and chatting. We all had segars save old Garl. He stuck to his pipe. It was an old companion, and he liked its flavor. While we thus sat, Ben called our attention to two men who were passing through a hollow, some sixty rods distant. They were stout, well clad men, and seemed in a hurry.

"Them don't look like honest men," said Garl, still gazing upon them.

"Don't they?" said Abner.

"Not a bit of it. D'ye mind how they turn an' look back every once in a while? I tell ye, they'r villains—now ye may depend on't."

Just as he ceased speaking the strangers disappeared behind a clump of mulberry trees; and shortly afterwards we saw them again in a path that led towards the swamp. A few observations were passed, among which was one from Uncle Abner, to the effect that no honest man could have any particular business in his swamp,—and then the subject was dropped, and we resumed the train of conversation which had been thus interrupted.

The sun came up very warm, and we remained in the house most of the forenoon. It was very near noon, and we had gone out upon the shady side of the veranda, when we saw a horseman approaching at a brisk trot.

"Why—it's Mr. Wallerton," said our host. "He's our sheriff. What can he want here?"

"Jes' wait an' see ef them two strangers haint got somethin' to do with this," suggested Garl.

And Garl was right. We went down and met Wallerton at the door. He was just the man for the office he held. He was not a burly man; nor yet was he powerful in his build; but he possessed one of those peculiar faces which at once mark the cold, calculating, fearless man—full of nerve and muscle, and quick in both thought and action. In frame he was small and symmetrical; his dress consisted of a dark gray shirt of stout linen, secured at the waist by a belt, within which, were stuck a brace of heavy pistols; a cap of yellow skin; and a pair of leggings of the same material. As a sheriff, one would trust him implicitly; as a villain, he would have been feared in the same ratio.

As soon as we had all been introduced to him he turned to our host and said,—

"I am after two runaways. Have you seen any one pass here to-day?"

"Yes," returned Abner; "we saw two men pass this morning, and we thought, too, that they had a villainous look."

"Were they stout men?"

"Yes."

"Dressed in grey clothes?"

"Yes—and pretty neat, too."

"Did they have any arms?"

"Not in sight."

"Which way did they go?"

"We saw them first, passing through the hollow over beyond the corner of the cotton-field; and after that, they went towards the swamp, and I'm sure they entered it."

"Those are the chaps," cried the sheriff. "They are Watty Muntoon and Hammer Harn—two of the worst men in the State. They murdered two old men, and a young girl, only night before last, and robbed the house of ten thousand dollars in gold and bank-notes. I tracked them to Shreveport, and there I got a partial clue that led me this way."

We had heard of Harn while in New Orleans; and while on the boat, we had heard considerable said about both of them. They were not only notorious villains, but for several years had succeeded in avoiding trial. They had been captured twice, but had made their escape. They had committed several daring highway robberies within the past month; and how many murders they might have done, was not known.

"Look ye," said Wallerton; "I have men enough at Belleview, but I dared not bring them on. I heard that you had a gang of hunters here, and I hoped I might find help among you. I am very sure that they have accomplices, or receivers, at Shreveport; and had I been seen coming out with a posse there might have been half a dozen stout villains at my heels. These fellows deal their cards carefully, and keep a hidden hand while they can. Now say: Will you go?"

There were six yes's spoken so near together that they sounded almost like one. The sheriff was much pleased.

"They can't get far away in that swamp, can they?" he asked.

"No," answered the host. "They can poke around in the bottom timber, but they can't get off without coming back this way."

"That's it," resumed Wallerton. "They mean to hide through the day, and make their escape to-night. For, ye see, if they could only gain the great highway under cover of night, they'd be in Arkansas long before morning. But I think we'll give 'em some trouble. When can we start?"

"We must have dinner first," said Abner. "You shall have a bite with us, and then we'll set out."

The officer liked this plan, as he knew the villains would make no effort to escape from the swamp before dark.

It was not a great while to our dinner hour, and when the meal was finished we prepared to set out.

"Now look," said Wallerton, "we may have some hot work. Any two of us may fall upon the villains alone. The safest way will be for each man to prepare himself upon the supposition that he is to meet the rascals single-handed."

This was good advice, and we acted upon it. We each took a brace of pistols, hunting-knife and rifle. We were warned by the sheriff to be careful, for he assured us that the two murderers were not only desperate characters, but in the present case 'twould be life and death with them. If they could kill us—every one, and then be apprehended, their fate could be no worse than it would be if they were captured without striking a blow.

There were seven of us, including the sheriff, Fitzeben being off among his congeners; and though we presented somewhat of a formidable array, yet we knew we had a dangerous work before us. We started, however, taking the direct way to the nearest point of the swamp, which was not far from a mile distant. Among the various topics of conversation on the way, the movements of the robbers came up, and it was not improbable that they had sought the swamp with the intention of making a visit to the house of our host on their return. Had they done so, they might have made quite a lift, as no one would have been likely to be on the watch, unless some of the negroes should have happened to be awake.

There were but two points where the swamp could be entered with safety, and one of them was close by the place we first reached. Here we brought the skill of old Garl into use. He examined the path, and very soon announced that no one had passed in there during the day. Uncle Abner next led us to the second opening, which was nearly half a mile distant, and here the trapper made another examination.

"Huyr they be!" he cried, almost as soon as he cast his eyes on the ground.

He showed us the "signs," and though we should not have discovered them, yet we could see them now they were pointed out.

"Now look here," said our host, as soon as we became satisfied that the villains were in the swamp, "they can't have gone a great ways in this direction. The great bayou runs almost around it, and the rest of the way is all soft mud. If they have gone in here, they must be somewhere within the range of half a mile."

"Perhaps our friend can trace them farther," suggested Wallerton.

"We'll see how fur their trail is signed," returned Garl: "Come on."

He walked on quite rapidly for some distance, following the tracks over a sort of springy sward, which, from its shaking beneath our feet, seemed to have a bottom of deep mud. The trees were large and plenty, but there was little or no undergrowth. From some cause this bottom had been formed by a deposit of mud, and the stiff, stout-rooted grass had grown so thickly as to form a kind of crust, or network, sufficiently strong to bear our weight.

At length we came to a point where the tangled underwood began to grow thick and strong, and here Garl lost the trail. He searched a long while, but without effect.

"What is there beyond here?" he asked of Uncle Abner.

"The shore of the bayou isn't far off," returned the old man.

"And how is it here to the left?"

"Well, I couldn't say exactly. The bayou takes a sweep around, but I don't think it runs up between here and the path we first came to."

"Then thar may be good footin' in here?"

"Oh yes—I am sure there is; only the undergrowth is so thick that we can't navigate it."

"Them yer chaps are in huyr," the trapper said, pointing to the left, which was in the direction of the house, and, of course, towards the first path: "I seed a trail jest back a bit. Come on."

We followed him back a few rods, and there we found a place where some one had evidently worked a way through.

"Now look ye," resumed the old trapper, after he had assured himself that the robbers had gone that way, "it's jest no use for all of us to go in arter them yer chaps. Ef they're hid, an' they see a sheriff with us, they'll know what we're arter, and mayhap give us trouble."

"If you were dealing with some men, your plan would be a good one," returned Wallerton; "but with them chaps it's no kind of use. They wont allow you to come any nearer than they will me. They wont imagine that two or three men have come out here this hot day, among musquitoes and green flies, to hunt for game. No, no;—we'll poke in together, and if the need comes we can shoot them down."

Garl gave in at once, and then led the way through the underbrush. The trail was easily followed, as we could all see where the bushes were broken down. At the distance of half-a-dozen rods we came to one of the clearest and most firm-bottomed openings, in the swamps It was a wide tract, mostly covered with honey-locust, with very little undergrowth, and with the bottom almost solid.

"Gracious!" uttered Abner, as he gazed about in astonishment. "I never mistrusted this. Rice would grow here."

"So would a great many things," returned the sheriff.

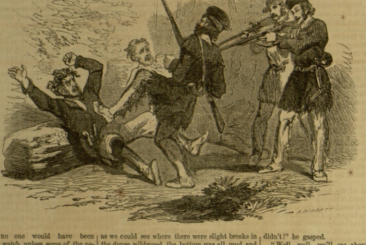
The opening—for it was an opening when compared with the rest of the swamp—appeared to contain some fifteen to twenty acres, with trees of a uniform size, and so far apart that a heavy horse-team could have been driven all over it. It was covered by a growth of tall, green, tough grass, and the surface was very near level.

"Those fellows have been here before," said the officer. "I know they have had a hiding place in this neighborhood, and I'll warrant ye this is it."

"Somebody's been here," responded Garl, "for see—thar's tracks all over hereabout. Likely they've had another entrance from the first openin'—the one whar we first stopped—but took this way to-day for fear we'd blaze 'em from the house."

This seemed very likely; but then where were the robbers? We finally concluded to separate into two parties, and commence a rigid search, but not to get out of sight of each other. The sheriff, with Uncle Abner, Ben, and Ned, turned to the left, intending to sweep that side; while old Garl, Harris, and myself, turned to the right. We agreed that at the first sound of alarm from either party the other should immediately start to join them. With this understanding we separated.

Garl, Harris, and myself shouldered our rifles, and started on to the right as had been arranged. The skirting of this opening was curious. It was like a hedge, and grew as regularly as any hedge could be set out; and in most places it would have been impossible for a man to get through without cutting his way. Within six yards of this hedge, as we could see where there were slight breaks in the dense wildwood, the bottom was all mud and water. Presently we came to a place where there seemed to have once been a cabin of some sort, probably erected by runaway slaves. There were the foundation sticks in their original places, and about lay other relics of the habitation. And near here, too, we found fresh tracks.



We had just turned an angle in the hedge, when Garl suddenly stopped and placed his finger to his lips:

"—st!" he uttered—"look thar!"

We looked in the direction pointed out by his large, bony finger, and I could just see, over a huge log, something dark, like the top of a cap; and while I looked, a second one popped up in sight.

"It's them!" whispered the trapper, at the same time sitting down to a squatting posture, which example we followed. The log was not over fifty yards distant, and the robbers, if such they were, had no suspicion of the presence of an enemy.

"Now how'll we work it?" Garl resumed, after we had settled down together.

"Is there any use in trying to creep up behind them?" queried Harris.

"I think we mout do it," replied the old man. "Suppose we try it. We can cock our rifles, an' then, ef they diskiver us afore we reach 'em, we can draw on 'em afore they can do anything with their pistols."

This seemed reasonable, and we at once proceeded to act upon the proposition. We cocked our pieces, and then crept on. The distance was short.

"I rayther reckon them yer chaps is dozin'," whispered Garl, as we crept on close together: "Their heads kind o' bob about as though they was. Look here—we'll have 'em in this shape: When we get clos't to 'em, an' rise on 'em, do you jest level yer pieces, an' keep 'em so, an' leave the rest to me. In coorse you'll fire ef they offer any nonsense or ugliness."

We promised, and in a few moments more we were within half-a-dozen yards of the log. We arose carefully to our feet, and could see the heads of the two men plainly. The sun was at their backs, and they were dozing. We looked over just far enough to see that they were the very men we were after. There was not the slightest particle of doubt about this. At a motion from Garl we arose and levelled our rifles, while he held his in his hand, ready for use in case of need.

"*Hallo!*" shouted the trapper.

The two men started to their feet, as though lightning had crashed upon them. They gazed in nearly every wrong direction before they turned fairly upon us. As soon as they saw us their hands instinctively dropped to their pistols.

"Hold on!" shouted Garl, in a tone and with a look which no man could mistake: "These yer two rifles ye see lookin' at yer never missed their mark yet! Make a motion to them irons o' your'n, and ye drop like a broken-winged buzzard!—Now who be ye?"

"And who are you?" defiantly returned the larger of the two. They were both large men, and both of powerful, muscular frames; and they both looked like villains, too; aye, they looked like the worst kind of villains—dark-faced and sinister, with diabolical eyes, and bloody expressions.

"We belong to this bottom, stranger," resumed Garl; "but you don't seem nateral hereabouts. Who be ye?"

True, these men expected nothing but death if they were taken; but there was something in the muzzles of those two rifles—in the sudden appearance of the hunters—and in the look, tone, and bearing of the powerful, iron-visaged old trapper, that unnerved them. It is not natural for any man to throw away his life while there is room for a doubt, and more especially if that man be a villain—for villains fear death.

"You put down them rifles and we'll talk," said the larger robber.

"We'll see to that presently," responded Garl, at the same time moving nearer to them. "S'pose you jest give me them pistols first."

The villain replied that he'd see the trapper in a very warm place first.

"You may be sent thar in a twinklin' ef ye ain't keerful," was Garl's answer. And then he added, in a tone that made even the murderer's quake, and at the same time revealing to me a show of ugliness such as I never before believed his face was capable of,—"Now give me them pistols! Ef ye hesitate, or ef ye touch hammer or trigger, ye drop!"

Thus speaking the stern old trapper advanced and put forth his hand. The robber hesitated, and his fists were clenched. Garl looked him in the eye, and, with his hand still advanced, he drew up his foot and let it fly like a flash into the pit of the villain's stomach. The fellow doubled up and sank upon the ground with the breath knocked entirely from his body. The other one saw the movement, and was upon the point of cocking a pistol which he had snatched from his belt, when I slightly changed the direction of my rifle, and fired. His right arm dropped by his side like a lump of lead, the bone being shattered above the elbow.

Of course we had no more trouble. The leader was bound ere his breath had fairly returned, and his companion was simply disarmed. At this point the other party came up, they having been close at hand when I fired.

"Hi! There's the game!" cried the sheriff. "Well, Watty, how do you like this?"

This was addressed to the first one. He gazed into the face of Wallerton, and all his assurance seemed to leave him.

"Ho!" he gasped, with a furious volley of oaths, "you've done it, haint ye?"

"Yes, I have, Watty, and you might have known I should. You were a fool to remain so long beneath the nose of Tom Wallerton."

"O—don't boast. You've been years trying to do this thing."

"No, no, Watty. I haven't tried myself until since you murdered poor old Bayotte and his cousins!"

Watty Muntoon turned pale as death, and for a moment his presence of mind forsook him. But he rallied.

"Who murdered him?—I didn't!" he gasped.

"Well, well—we'll see about that. Perhaps you didn't."

Poor Harn was in agony, but we couldn't help him much there. We turned them towards the plantation as soon as possible, and started. When we reached the house the shattered arm was fixed as well as possible; and then Abner had his double team put under harness, and the robbers were taken to Shreveport, where they arrived just at dark.

Hammer Harn's arm was set, but it never grew together again, for ere nature had time to perform that work his neck was broken. And Watty Muntoon met with the same mishap, and at the same time, a competent court having decided that the good of society required that they should be hanged.

That was a strange kind of game to be hunted by our party; but I doubt if ever there was anything else trapped in that section, the removal of which conduced to a greater good for community, than did the trapping of those two hardened wretches.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Mothers and Nurses.—A correspondent at Boston informs us that his infant son, a fine baby of fifteen months old, ever since September last, has been particularly restless and uneasy; and though previously called a quiet child, nothing would pacify him, nor give him the least relief. Both he and the mother attributed the child's continued complaints to teething and other causes, until one afternoon, on his mother turning him up, she discovered a protuberance just above the stomach, as if some hard substance was evidently forcing itself through the skin. A surgeon being called in, he forced this substance back again, and notwithstanding the poor infant's shrieks of agony, stropped it down with a cork plaster. For a short time the poor child seemed to be getting better—though at times, and for weeks together, he was fretful and seemed very uneasy. Thus matters went on until the 21st of last month, when he cried the whole day. "In the evening," continues our correspondent, "he gave such a sudden start, that his mother thought a pin had got into his clothes, and on examining him there was a similar protuberance to the former in his side, rather inclining towards the back. Another surgeon was called in, who immediately pronounced it to be a *needle*, which he very skilfully abstracted from the infant's body, and gave it immediate relief. It is now in my possession, is a fine sewing needle, about 1 1-4 inch in length, the eye broken off, and very much corroded, and I shall carefully preserve it as a memorial of my poor child's suffering." This should warn parents to treat their fretting children with much tenderness and patience, as it is impossible to tell what pains the poor little things may be suffering.

A Disappointed Lover.—Do not give way to such despair. Time will cure you, as certainly as you live. Uncountable lovers before you have been as bitterly disappointed; have pondered upon razors and arsenic; have thought "life no longer desirable," and all women heartless, soulless flirts; have "given away to the blackest despair;" have supposed their hearts "withered," and that there was "no more happiness for them on earth;" and all that sort of thing; and yet they have come out of this melancholy and seemingly hopeless state as good as new, if not better. The human heart—especially a masculine one—is about the toughest thing, and the hardest to break, of all known substances; and notwithstanding your present determination to be miserable, we have not the slightest doubt that you will in a few months relish a mutton chop and a pretty woman's face just as much as ever you did in your life. If you don't we'll give you a year's subscription to the Ledger; and if that does not cure you, then your case is indeed a serious one.

An Only Son.—You ought to be ashamed of yourself for becoming involved in such bickerings with your widowed mother, who has evidently treated you with an indulgence and kindness which your shrivelled soul can not appreciate. No matter if she be querulous and exacting at times; you should on such occasions be all the more eager to obey her, and soften the asperities of her experience by unusual exhibitions of filial love and devotion. A son can never repay his mother for her care of him and for the wearying toils and anxieties which she has inevitably experienced for his sake; and the idea that a great boy of nineteen should appeal to a stranger *against* his mother, in a matter of private misunderstanding of no consequence, is sufficient proof that he is as destitute of delicacy and good-breeding as he is of filial love and obedience.

Trouble.—A boarding-house keeper has no right to retain a boarder's trunk, or any other property, because the latter owes him for board. The boarder can carry away his goods, and if his landlord attempts to detain him by force, he can knock him down, or resort to any means necessary to enable him to get away. A *hotel-keeper*, however, has a lien for his bill on a guest's baggage, and can retain it until the indebtedness is discharged. The reason of this is, that a hotel-keeper is *compelled* to receive any guest that comes to his house, if it be not already full, and the law allows him a corresponding protection. On the other hand, a boarding-house keeper need not receive a boarder unless he chooses to do so.

Bianca.—No, no! That will never do. The idea of repudiating a debt, because your creditor has insulted you subsequently to the contracting of the indebtedness, is not only preposterous but dishonest. Pay him up, to the last mill, and then you will be in a better position to call him to an account and exact a settlement of him for his improper conduct towards you. Never let any sentiments of anger drive you from the path of strict integrity; if you do you will sooner or later bitterly repent the indiscretion—not to say folly.

Jessie Jenkins.—We can not give you any encouragement in the career which you say you have chosen. By encouragement we mean *employment*.—Our list of contributors is full. As to your qualifications and literary talents generally, we do not wish to give an opinion, as we have not read, and probably never shall have time to read, enough of your writings to base a judgment upon.

William O.—Your teacher is right; *boat* and *bat* do signify, primarily, the same idea, namely: to smite or cut, or something smitten or cut. The original boat was a canoe, or something merely "cut out" of a log, and which, out West, is still called a "dug-out."

A Disappointed Lover says his sweetheart, who is at boarding-school, has not answered his first letter, as she "solemnly agreed to do;" that he "loves her to distraction;" that "this horrid silence on her part is wearing him away;" that if she don't write soon he shall fall in love with another girl who is all ready to receive his attentions; and he wishes to know if, under the circumstances, he would be justified in "tearing the deceiver's image from his heart, and paying his devotions at a shrine that will never be desecrated by deceit and hypocrisy?" As this young gentleman is a type of a numerous class, we will say to him for the benefit of his kind, that the fact of his having "another girl" all ready to fall in love with, is pretty good proof that his "undying love" for the young lady who is away at boarding-school has not its roots in his heart, but in his temper and vanity. A man who loves truly does not so comport himself. In case he should not hear from his beloved at an appointed time, he would experience emotions of fear and solicitude for her safety and well-being, and not of selfish impatience, nor a desire to revenge himself by deserting her and falling in love with another. Our correspondent seems to think that "falling in love" is a mere act of volition, and that he can fall in love as easily as he could fall into a ditch. It is of little consequence what such persons do; they are mere shifting, groaning, squeaking weathercocks, blown about by every gust of temper, and only fit to be used as warnings to better people.

Greenwich.—Notwithstanding the announcement of the journal that you have taken the pains to send us, Mrs. Southworth is not now writing and will not henceforth write any stories or novelettes for, or in any manner contribute to, any paper whatever, except the New York Ledger. The reason of this is—other papers are too weak in their infancy, or too much decayed in their old age, to pay her what she asks for her writings. Since the Ledger introduced the new and extraordinary era of *paying liberal prices to first class writers*, the old granny publications and mushroom newspapers have to fall back on such talent as considers itself abundantly rewarded by the sight of its productions in print. Such gratuitous slip-slop of course finds but a meager sale; hence, a cramp in the exchequer of those publishers who deal in it; hence, also, a declining circulation of their journals; hence, again, their loss of Fanny Fern, Mrs. Southworth, Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., Emerson Bennett, and "more of the same sort;" hence, also, much imbecile wrath on the part of the proprietors of the crampt and declining journals aforesaid, and many spiteful flings at the Ledger;—at all of which we serenely smile from the top of our three-hundred-thousand circulation, and go on inflexibly minding our own business.

Curiosity.—No; we do not answer all the questions asked us by several hundreds weekly. In the first place, we have not room enough in which to answer them all; in the second place, to answer some of them would require too much trouble in hunting up the information, and too much space in which to publish it; and so we might go on, giving reasons as plentiful as blackberries, for not answering all the queries sent to us. Of course, we treat every communication as strictly confidential, and it is utterly useless for any one to attempt to ascertain *what* another person has written to us, or *who* it is that asks any particular question; hence, you will not be surprised at not being informed who asked the question about which you inquire. It is a very indelicate thing for you to seek thus to pry into another's affairs; but we have long since ceased to be astonished at the exhibition of any degree of indelicacy in regard to such affairs—or, in fact, in relation to almost any subject whatever.

Five Subscribers.—During the debate in the United States Senate, in March 1849, in regard to General Shield's non-eligibleness to the U. S. Senatorship on account of his not having been a citizen of the United States for the full term of nine years at the date of his election, it was stated and admitted that he was born in Ireland. He resigned his claim to the seat, went back to Illinois and was re-elected; and his term of nine years being then fully matured, he was admitted to his seat without further question.

L. L. L.—No. You acted in an unjustifiable manner. No matter what the provocation, a man has no business to write an ungentlemanly letter to a woman, or to exhibit any superciliousness or impertinence. Sudden anger, or vehement indignation, is no excuse for a letter of such a character, because one would have ample time for reflection and cooling off before writing and sending off such a communication. A man has no right, under any circumstances, to make either an ass or a ruffian of himself—especially in writing.

A Mechanic, of Cincinnati, can not understand how a girl only fourteen years old can be allowed to marry when she is not of age until she is twenty-one. The mystery is easily explained: a girl's age, provided she is fourteen, is of no consequence, legally speaking, so far as her marriage is concerned. Her parents have a right to prevent her marrying, if they can, before she is of age; but if she eludes their vigilance and her marriage be consummated, there is no remedy.

An Unhappy Husband.—If you understand your own case and have stated it truly, it seems altogether hopeless. When a woman has sunk so low as to indulge in habitual intoxication there is little hope of any cure except in death. For your children's sake, you had better nerve yourself up to endure this affliction as you best can, until a merciful Providence shall open up some way of escape. One thing is certain, namely: that you will find no relief in complainings and despair, but only additional grief and incurable wo.

Methuen.—We cannnot sympathize with your grievances, inasmuch as we believe in Sabbath-schools. They are most important and useful institutions, and you could not do better than attend one regularly with all your children. You would probably there find, in the simple, and pure, and benevolent exercises peculiar to the Sabbath-school, that serenity of mind, and peace of soul, which, it seems, all your fault-finding with, and hostility to the institution have not enabled you to compass.

To a Large Class of Persons.—We are constantly annoyed by ignorant or impertinent people who send us contributions unasked, with a request that if we do not like them we will remail them to the senders. All such contributions are at once disposed of by fire or basket. We will not take the slightest notice of any contribution which is thrust upon us unasked. Such writers as we wish to engage, we will apply to: voluntary contributions are not wanted from any quarter whatever.

Harry L.—If you are at all suspicious that the dog which bit your little brother was rabid, you should at once obtain the best medical counsel you can possibly command. Such a matter is vastly too serious for delay, trifling, or the least uncertainty. You should, if possible,

——"Make assurance
Doubly sure, and take a bond of Fate."

An Old Reader wishes to know "What is the *Real?*" and "What the *Ideal?*" We cannot better answer these questions, perhaps, than by calling your attention to the success of the Ledger itself as a specimen of the "*Real*," and referring you to the profits of some of our jealous cotemporaries for samples of the "*Ideal*."

M. R.—No one is "entitled" to an answer to a question, in this department of the Ledger, no matter if he buys fifty thousand copies of the paper every week. Whoever buys the Ledger buys it for *his own* sake, and not for ours. We answer such questions as we please, and such as our time and space will permit. When a man claims an answer as a right, he isn't very likely to get it.

A Father wishes to know what should be done with a boy who comes to the breakfast-table with his hair over his eyes, his face unwashed, his coat unbuttoned, and looking more like a scarecrow than a living boy? Such a boy's *father* ought to be severely punished if his son should come to the table *twice* in such a plight.

E. R. D.—The only way that hair can be removed from a lady's face so as to prevent its growing again, is to pull it out by the roots. Tweezers can be used for that purpose, and as many hairs can be plucked at a time as the victim can stand the removal of.

J. P. M.—You should refuse to lend your Ledger to your stingy neighbors. If you are willing to let them have the first reading of it, they can not be blamed for accepting the favor. You have the remedy in your own hands and ought to apply it.

Ansel.—Yes; it is proper to speak of a lady, introduce a lady, or superscribe a letter to a lady, as Mrs. General Jones, or Mrs. Dr. Smith, &c., &c., although it would be better taste to give a lady her own proper and feminine address, instead of her husband's masculine one.

Columbus.—We would not advise any family that is comfortably situated in the Eastern or Middle States to move "out West." Life in new settlements is a constant struggle with discomforts, under which people reared in the East are apt to sink.

Laurine Sewell.—We can furnish you with Ledgers as far back as June 7th, 1856, from which time up to the present issue, (May 2nd.,) will be forty-eight numbers, and the cost will be $1.92.

Amanda wishes to know what course a woman should pursue, who has reached the age of twenty-five years without receiving an offer of marriage? We think she had better "pursue the even tenor of her way."

Mary.—There is nothing which will impart clearness and brightness to eyes that are naturally dull. No one can tell whether your chronic hoarseness can be cured until he knows the cause of it.

Joseph S. K., Mobile.—We can send you, by mail, the numbers of the Ledger you ask for, for twenty cents; when you send for them, be particular to specify the numbers wanted.

William A.—A couple must be their own judges as to what is sufficient cause for the annulling of a marriage engagement.

J. L.—Yes; we send the Ledger to European subscribers. You will have to pay $1.04 extra for postage to England.

⁂ *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*